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# SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR

## ANNUAL

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ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE  
73RD BIRTHDAY OF SRI AUROBINDO

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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
1. Maya ... (Poem) Amalkiran ...	1
2. Saviour ... ( „ ) Nirodbaran ...	1
3. Beyond Questioning ( „ ) Dilip Kumar Roy ...	2
4. For Thee ... ( „ ) Punjalal ...	4
5. Letter of Sri Aurobindo to Disciples ...	5
6. The Body Human ... Nolinikanta Gupta ...	24
7. Sphota and the Spoken Word Pt. T. V. Kapali Sastry ...	29
8. Sri Aurobindo and Kena Upanishad ...	44
9. Basis of Morality ... Anilbaran Roy ...	71
10. The Place of Evil in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy ...	85
11. The Integral Vision in History ...	103
12. Education and Yoga ... Dr. Indra Sen ...	134
13. Sri Aurobindo and Nikolai Hartmann ...	168
14. The Later Poems of Sri Aurobindo ...	182
15. Questions and Answers ... A. B. Purani ...	199

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## Maya

A scorching shadow masked as living light,  
Earth's smile of painted passion withers now!  
But is there hollow on black ravenous hollow  
With never a gold core of love divine?  
How pass then reveries of angelic wings  
Or sudden stabs of paradise through clay  
Revealing the blind heart of all desire?  
Surely some haloed beauty hides within  
The mournful spaces of unlustred limbs  
To call with secret eyes a perfect Sun  
Whose glory yearns across the drouth of hell!  
Behind the false glow dreams the epiphany—  
But like a face of night implacable  
Save to the soul's virginity, the unknown  
White fire whose arms enclasp infinitude . . .

AMALKIRAN.

## Saviour

What world of power you hold in your mortal hands!  
O beauty imperishable of heaven's Mood,  
On the wonder-verge of earth your figure stands  
Like a sun crowning the sky-solitude.

We follow our time-grey round and cannot see  
The Infinite's splendour mirrored in your face.  
Or feel you bear our pale mortality  
Like a weary child in your fathomless embrace.

The kingdom of your light you now have brought  
That its immortal treasures we may share  
And grow beyond the passionate fire of thought  
Into a universe of tranquil prayer.

Everywhere now is heard the ardent cry  
That you have wakened in each yearning soul:  
In you we find our dream of eternity  
And capture in your heart God's limitless Whole.

NIRODBARAN,

## Beyond Questioning

O Boatman, how far is thy rumoured land of Moon  
 I fail to guess.  
 Strange shadows lengthen momentarily as the day wanes, yet  
 A loveliness  
 Of something unmet a radiance casts . . . sometimes a dim  
 Shimmer . . . a lustre  
 Of an indefinable Face we sue but which pursues us  
 Even faster!

How in the past I longed to tear the veil and all  
That separates  
Our homesick heart from the Home elusive, near yet far,  
Which, beckoning, waits!  
Impatient of the shadows how I brooded . . . and yet  
How could I rue  
My thoughtless plunge for what thou, Boatman, has attained  
And wouldst still woo?

I brooded often . . . seldom grieved . . . for I felt there was  
 A meaning in  
 The wistfulness inherent in our song that claimed  
 Yet could not win,—  
 Even when a Voice sang: “Unto a tingling cry of heart  
 A Heart replies,  
 Though the Answer faring on in space trail off to a cadence,  
 It never dies.”

Who can believe that songs awake from deeps of hush  
By the hush are slain?  
Till a circuit is completed how shall aught be quelled,  
Be it joy or pain?  
An arrow of Flame released by Time from Night's deep bow  
Shall travel till  
It sail into its native Harbour, of stars, which only  
Gloom can reveal.

Why was it so ordained, O friend, I know not—yet  
 Something within  
 My self beyond the clutch of my lone yearning arms  
 Sings: "Soul must win

### BEYOND QUESTIONING

What is of the essence of her being—she shall not rest  
In embraces not  
Her own, for what she once has tasted is no more  
By her forgot.”

O Boatman, how my questioning too dislimns . . . for though  
I fail to guess  
How far is thy Moon’s haven, yet tell me—do I not know  
Her heart of Grace?

DILIP KUMAR ROY.

## For Thee

Each move of my hand for Thy work  
Is a wave of uplifting delight,  
Defying the down-pull of Murk  
And its ramparts of rock-rooted might.

Each step that I solemnly take  
On the path of Thy beckoning Light  
Is a sovereign rhythm without break  
Whose one goal is Thy Self diamond-white.

Each time that I utter Thy name  
With the faith of a child's flowing love,  
In response to my cry and my claim  
Comes descending Thy Grace from above.

Each thought that proceeds from my mind  
As a pilgrim of Truth that Thou holdest  
Is a freedom from falsehoods purblind,  
And awakens to sight Thou unfoldest.

Each moment of life dedicated  
To Thee is immortally sweet,  
With the heart of eternity mated  
And crowned with Thy Glory infinite.

Each touch of Thy fingers all tender  
That my soul at Thy feet doth receive  
Is an urge for an utter surrender  
To Thy Love that Thou leanest to give.

For Thee is each drop of my blood,  
And my being awake or asleep,  
And my self in a flowery flood  
Shall seek out and be lost in Thy deep.

PUNJALAL.





# Letters of Sri Aurobindo to Disciples

## 1

Yoga is not a thing of ideas but of inner spiritual experience. Merely to be attracted to any set of religious or spiritual ideas does not bring with it any realisation. Yoga means a change of consciousness; a mere mental activity will not bring a change of consciousness, it can only bring a change of mind. And if your mind is sufficiently mobile, it will go on changing from one thing to another till the end without arriving at any sure way or any spiritual harbour. The mind can think and doubt and question and accept and withdraw its acceptance, make formations and unmake them, pass decisions and revoke them, judging always on the surface and by surface indications and therefore never coming to any deep and firm experience of Truth, but by itself it can do no more. There are only three ways by which it can make itself a channel or instrument of Truth. Either it must fall silent in the Self and give room for a wider and greater consciousness; or it must make itself passive to an inner Light and allow that Light to use it as a means of expression; or else it must itself change from the questioning intellectual superficial mind it now is to an intuitive intelligence, a mind of vision fit for the direct perception of the divine Truth.

If you want to do anything in the path of Yoga, you must fix once for all what way you mean to follow. It is no use setting your face towards the future and then always looking back towards the past; in this way you will arrive nowhere. If you are tied to your past, return to it and

follow the way you then choose; but if you choose this way instead, you must give yourself to it single-mindedly and not look back at every moment.

11-5-31.

## II

All this insistence upon action is absurd if one has not the light by which to act. Yoga must include life and not exclude. It does not mean that we are bound to accept life as it is with all its stumbling ignorance and misery and the obscure confusion of human will and reason and impulse and instinct which it expresses. The advocates of action think that by human intellect and energy making an always new rush, every thing can be put right; the present state of the world after a development of the intellect and a stupendous output of energy for which there is no historical parallel is a signal proof of the emptiness of the illusion under which they labour. Yoga takes the stand that it is only by a change of consciousness that the true basis of life can be discovered; from within outward is indeed the rule. But within does not mean some quarter inch behind the surface. One must go deep and find the soul, the self, the Divine Reality within us and only then can life become a true expression of what we can be instead of a blind and always repeated confused blur of the inadequate and imperfect thing we were. The choice is between remaining in the old jumble and groping about in the hope of stumbling on some discovery or standing back and seeking the Light within till we discover and can build the Godhead within and without us.

16-6-1932.



## III

The spiritual life (*adhyatma jivan*), the religious life (*dharma jivan*) and the ordinary human life of which morality is a part are three quite different things and one must know which one desires and not confuse the three together. The ordinary life is that of the average human consciousness separated from its own true self and from the Divine and led by the common habits of the mind, life and body which are the laws of the Ignorance. The religious life is a movement of the same ignorant human consciousness, turning or trying to turn away from the earth towards the Divine, but as yet without knowledge and led by the dogmatic tenets and rules of some sect or creed which claims to have found the way out of the bonds of the earth-consciousness into some beatific Beyond. The religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual, but very often it is only a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices or set ideas and forms without any issue. The spiritual life, on the contrary, proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from the ordinary consciousness, ignorant and separated from its true self and from God, to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine. For the spiritual seeker this change of consciousness is the one thing he seeks and nothing else matters.

Morality is a part of the ordinary life; it is an attempt to govern the outward conduct by certain mental rules or to form the character by these rules in the image of a certain mental ideal. The spiritual life goes beyond the mind; it enters into the deeper consciousness of the Spirit and acts out of the truth of the Spirit. As for the question about the ethical life and the need to realise God, it depends on what is meant by fulfilment of the objects of life (*jibaner*

*sarthakata*). If an entry into the spiritual consciousness is part of it, then mere morality will not give it to you.

Politics as such has nothing to do with the spiritual life. If the spiritual man does anything for his country, it is in order to do the will of the Divine and as part of a divinely appointed work and not from any other common human motive. In none of his acts does he proceed from the common mental and vital motives which move ordinary men but acts out of the truth of the Spirit and from an inner command of which he knows the source.

The kind of worship (*pūja*) spoken of in the letter belongs to the religious life. It can, if rightly done in the deepest religious spirit, prepare the mind and heart to some extent but no more. But if worship is done as part of meditation or with a true aspiration to the spiritual reality and the spiritual consciousness and with the yearning for contact and union with the Divine, then it can be spiritually effective.

If you have a sincere aspiration to the spiritual change in your heart and soul, then you will find the way and the Guide. A mere mental seeking and questioning are not enough to open the doors of the Spirit.

#### IV

The idea of usefulness to humanity is the old confusion due to secondhand ideas imported from the West. Obviously, to be "useful" to humanity there is no need of Yoga; everyone who leads the human life is useful to humanity in one way or another.

Yoga is directed towards God, not towards man. If a divine supramental consciousness and power can be brought down and established in the material world, that obviously would mean an immense change for the earth including humanity and its life. But the effect on

humanity would only be one result of the change; it cannot be the object of the sadhana. The object of the sadhana can only be to live in the divine consciousness and to manifest it in life.

26-7-1929.

## V

The true object of the Yoga is not philanthropy but to find the Divine, to enter into the divine consciousness and find one's true being (which is not the ego) in the Divine.

The "Ripus" cannot be conquered by *damana* (even if it succeeds to some extent, it only keeps them down), but does not destroy them; often compression only increases their force. It is only by purification through the Divine Consciousness entering into the egoistic nature and changing it that this thing can be done.

If he gives himself from deep within and is absolutely persevering in the Way, then only can he succeed.

March, 1930.

## VI

The three experiences of which you speak belong all to the same movement or the same stage of your spiritual life: they are initial movements of the consciousness to become aware of your inner being which was veiled, as in most, by the outer waking self. There are, we might say, two beings in us, one on the surface, our ordinary exterior mind, life, body consciousness, another behind the veil,

an inner mind, an inner life, an inner physical consciousness constituting another or inner self. This inner self once awake opens in its turn to our true real eternal self. It opens inwardly to the soul, called in the language of this Yoga the psychic being which supports our successive births and at each birth assumes a new mind, life and body. It opens above to the Self or Spirit which is unborn and by conscious recovery of it we transcend the changing personality and achieve freedom and full mastery over our nature.

You did quite right in first developing the sattwic qualities and building up the inner meditative quietude. It is possible by strenuous meditation or by certain methods of tense endeavour to open doors on to the inner being or even break down some of the walls between the inner and outer self before finishing or even undertaking this preliminary self-discipline, but it is not always wise to do it as that may lead to conditions of sadhana which may be very turbid, chaotic, beset with unnecessary dangers. By adopting the more patient course you have arrived at a point at which the doors of the inner being have begun almost automatically to swing open. Now both processes can go on side by side, but it is necessary to keep the sattwic quietude, patience, vigilance,—to hurry nothing, to force nothing, not to be led away by any strong lure or call of the intermediate stage which is now beginning before you are sure that it is the right call. For there are many vehement pulls from the forces of the inner planes which it is not safe to follow.

Your first experience is an opening into the inner mental self—the space between the eyebrows is the centre of the inner mind, vision, will and the blue light you saw was that of a higher mental plane, a spiritual mind, one might say, which is above the ordinary human mental intelligence. An opening into this higher mind is usually accompanied by a silence of the ordinary mental thought.

Our thoughts are not really created within ourselves independently in the small narrow thinking machine we call our mind; in fact they come to us from a vast mental space or ether either as mind-waves or waves of mind-force that carry a significance which takes shape in our personal mind or as thought-formations ready-made which we adopt and call ours. Our outer mind is blind to this process of Nature; but by the awakening of the inner mind we can become aware of it. What you saw was the receding of this constant mental invasion and the retreat of the thought-forms beyond the horizon of the wide space of mental Nature. You felt this horizon to be in yourself somewhere, but evidently it was in that larger self-space which even in its more limited field just between the eyebrows you felt to be bigger than the corresponding physical space. In fact though the inner mind spaces have horizons, they stretch beyond those horizons—illimitable. The inner mind is something very wide projecting itself into the infinite and finally identifying itself with the infinity of universal Mind. When we break out of the narrow limits of the external physical mind we begin to see inwardly and to feel this wideness, in the end this universality and infinity of the mental self-space. Thoughts are not the essence of mind-being, they are only an activity of mental nature; if that activity ceases, what appears then as a thought-free existence that manifests in its place is not a blank or void but something very real, substantial, concrete we may say—a mental being that extends itself widely and can be its own field of existence silent or active as well as the Witness, Knower, Master of that field and its action. Some feel it first as a void, but that is because their observation is untrained and insufficient and loss of activity gives them the sense of blank; an emptiness there is, but it is an emptiness of the ordinary activities, not a blank of existence.

The recurrence of the experience of the receding away

of thoughts, the cessation of the thought-generating mechanism and its replacement by the mental self-space, is normal and as it should be; for this silence or at any rate the capacity for it has to grow until one can have it at will or even established in an automatic permanence. For this silence of the ordinary mind-mechanism is necessary in order that the higher mentality may manifest, descend, occupy by degrees the place of the present imperfect mentality and transform the activities of the latter into its own fuller movements. The difficulty of its coming when you are at work is only at the beginning—afterwards when it is more settled one finds that one can carry on all the activities of life either in the pervading silence itself or at least with that as the support and background. The silence remains behind and there is the necessary action on the surface or the silence is our wide self and somewhere in it an active Power does the works of Nature without disturbing the silence. It is therefore quite right to suspend the work while the visitation of the experience is there—the development of this inner silent consciousness is sufficiently important to justify a brief interruption or pause.

In the case of the other two experiences, on the contrary, it is otherwise. The dream-experience must not be allowed to take hold of the waking hours and pull the consciousness within; it must confine its operation to the hours of sleep. So too there should be no push or pressure to break down the wall between the inner self and the outer "I"—the fusion must be allowed to take place by a developing inner action in its own natural time. I shall explain why in another letter.

5-4-1937.

## VII

Your second experience is a first movement of the awakening of the inner being in sleep. Ordinarily when one sleeps a complex phenomenon happens. The waking consciousness is no longer there, for all has been withdrawn within into the inner realms of which we are not aware when we are awake, though they exist; for then all that is put behind a veil by the waking mind and nothing remains except the surface self and the outward world—much as the veil of the sunlight hides from us the vast worlds of the stars that are behind it. Sleep is going inward in which the surface self and the outside world are put away from our sense and vision. But in ordinary sleep we do not become aware of the worlds within; the being seems submerged in a deep subconscious. On the surface of this subconscious floats an obscure layer in which dreams take place, as it seems to us, but, more correctly it may be said, are recorded. When we go very deeply asleep, we have what appears to us as a dreamless slumber; but in fact dreams are going on, but they are either too deep down to reach the recording surface or are forgotten, all recollection of their having existed even is wiped out in the transition to the waking consciousness. Ordinary dreams are for the most part or seem to be incoherent, because they are either woven by the subconscious out of deep-lying impressions left in it by our past inner and outer life, woven in a fantastic way which does not easily yield any clue of meaning to the waking mind's remembrance, or are fragmentary records, mostly distorted, of experiences which are going on behind the veil of sleep—very largely indeed these two elements get mixed up together. For in fact a large part of our consciousness in sleep does not get sunk into this subconscious state; it passes beyond the veil into other planes of being which are connected with our own inner planes, planes of supra-

physical existence, worlds of a larger life, mind or psyche which are there behind and whose influences come to us without our knowledge. Occasionally we get a dream from these planes, something more than a dream,—a dream experience which is a record direct or symbolic of what happens to us or around us there. As the inner consciousness grows by sadhana, these dream experiences increase in number, clearness, coherence, accuracy and after some growth of experience and consciousness, we can, if we observe, come to understand them and their significance to our inner life. Even we can by training become so conscious as to follow our own passage, usually veiled to our awareness and memory, through many realms and the process of the return to the waking state. At a certain pitch of this inner wakefulness this kind of sleep, a sleep of experiences, can replace the ordinary subconscious slumber.

It is of course an inner being or consciousness or something of the inner self that grows in this way, not, as usually it is, behind the veil of sleep, but in the sleep itself. In the condition which you describe, it is just becoming aware of sleep and dream and observing them—but as yet nothing farther—unless there is something in the nature of your dreams that has escaped you. But it is sufficiently awake for the surface consciousness to remember this state, that is to say, to receive and keep the report of it even in the transition from the sleep to the waking state which usually abolishes by oblivion all but fragments of the record of sleep happenings. You are right in feeling that the waking consciousness and this which is awake in sleep are not the same—they are different parts of the being.

When this growth of the inner sleep consciousness begins, there is often a pull to go inside and pursue the development even when there is no fatigue or need of sleep. Another cause aids this pull. It is usually the vital part of the inner being that first wakes in sleep and the first



dream experiences (as opposed to ordinary dreams) are usually in the great mass experiences of the vital plane, a world of supraphysical life, full of variety and interest, with many provinces, luminous or obscure, beautiful or perilous, often extremely attractive, where we can get much knowledge too both of our concealed parts of nature and of things happening to us behind the veil and of others which are of concern for the development of our parts of nature. The vital being in us then may get very much attracted to this range of experience, may want to live more in it and less in the outer life. This would be the source of that wanting to get back to something interesting and enthralling which accompanies the desire to fall into sleep. But this must not be encouraged in waking hours, it should be kept for hours set apart for sleep where it gets its natural field. Otherwise there may be an unbalancing, a tendency to live more and too much in the visions of the supraphysical realms and a decrease of the hold on outer realities. The knowledge, the enlargement of our consciousness of these fields of inner Nature is very desirable, but it must be kept in its own place and limits.

8-4-1937.

## VIII

In my last letter I had postponed the explanation of your third experience. What you have felt is indeed a touch of the Self, not the unborn Self above, the Atman of the Upanishads, for that is differently experienced through the silence of the thinking mind, but the inner being, the psychic supporting the inner mental, vital, physical being, of which I have spoken. A time must come for every seeker of complete self-knowledge when he is thus aware of

living in two worlds, two consciousnesses at the same time, two parts of the same existence. At present he lives in the outer consciousness, the outer being and sees within the inner self—but he will go more and more inward, till the position is reversed and he lives within in this new inner consciousness, inner self and feels the outer as something on the surface formed as an instrumental personality for the Inner's self-expression in the material world. Then from within a Power works on the outer to make it a conscious plastic instrument so that finally the inner and the outer may become fused into one. The wall you feel is indeed the wall of the ego which is based on the insistent identification of oneself with the outer personality and its movements. It is that identification which is the key-stone of the limitation and bondage from which the outer being suffers, preventing expansion, self-knowledge, spiritual freedom. But still the wall must not be prematurely broken down, because that may lead to a disruption or confusion or invasion of either part by the movements of the two separated worlds before they are ready to harmonise. A certain separation is necessary for sometime after one has become aware of these two parts of the being as existing together. The force of the Yoga must be given time to make the necessary adjustments and openings, and to take the being inward and then from this inward poise to work on the outer nature.

This does not mean that one should not allow the consciousness to go inward so that as soon as possible it should live in the inward world of being and see all anew from there. That inward going is most desirable and necessary and that change of vision also. I mean only that all should be done by a natural movement without haste. The movement of going inward may come rapidly, but even after that something of the wall of ego will be there and it will have to be steadily and patiently taken down so that no stone of it may abide. My warning against allowing

the sleep world to encroach on the waking hours is limited to that alone and does not refer to the inward movement in waking concentration or ordinary waking consciousness. The waking movement carries us finally into the inner self and by that inner self we grow into contact with and knowledge of the supraphysical worlds, but this contact and knowledge need not and should not lead to an excessive preoccupation with them or a subjection to their beings and forces. In sleep we actually enter into these worlds and there is danger, if the attraction of the sleep consciousness is too great and encroaches on the waking consciousness, of this excessive preoccupation and influence.

It is quite true that an inner purity and sincerity, in which one is motivated only by the higher call, is one's best safeguard against the lures of the intermediate stage. It keeps one on the right track and guards from deviation, until the psychic being is fully awake and in front and, once that happens, there is no further danger. If in addition to this purity and sincerity, there is a clear mind with a power of discrimination, that increases the safety in the earlier stages. I do not think I need or should specify too fully or exactly the forms the lure or pull is likely to take. It may be better not to call up these forces by an attention to them which may not be necessary. I do not suppose you are likely to be drawn away from the path by any of the greater perilous attractions. As for the minor inconveniences of the intermediate stage, they are not dangerous and can easily be set right as one goes by the growth of consciousness, discrimination and sure experience.

As I have said, the inward pull, the pull towards going inward is not undesirable and need not be resisted. At a particular stage it may be accompanied by an abundance of visions due to the growth of the inner sight which sees things belonging to all the planes of existence. That is a

valuable power helpful in the sadhana and should not be discouraged. But one must see and observe without attachment, keeping always the main object in front, realisation of the inner Self and the Divine—these things should only be regarded as incidental to the growth of consciousness and helpful to it, not as objects in themselves to be followed for their own sake. There should also be a discriminating mind which puts each thing in its place and can pause to understand its field and nature. There are some who become so eager after these subsidiary experiences that they begin to lose all sense of the true distinction and demarcation between different fields of reality. All that takes place in these experiences must not be taken as true—one has to discriminate, see what is mental formation or subjective construction and what is true, what is only suggestion from the larger mental and vital planes or what has reality only there and what is of value for help or guidance in inner sadhana or outer life.

16-4-1937.

## IX

## THE PIERCING OF THE VEIL

The piercing of the veil between the outer consciousness and the inner being is one of the crucial movements in Yoga. For Yoga means union with the Divine, but it also means awaking first to your inner self and then to your higher self,—a movement inward and a movement upward. It is, in fact, only through the awakening and coming to the front of the inner being that you can get into union with the Divine. The outer physical man is only an instrumental personality, and by himself he cannot arrive at this union,—he can only get occasional touches, religious feelings, imperfect intimations. And even these come not from the outer consciousness but from what is within us.

There are two mutually complementary movements; in one the inner being comes to the front and impresses its own normal motions on the outer consciousness to which they are unusual and abnormal; the other is to draw back from the outer consciousness, to go inside into the inner planes, enter the world of your inner self and wake in the hidden parts of your being. When that plunge has once been taken, you are marked for the Yogic, the spiritual life and nothing can efface the seal that has been put upon you.

This inward movement takes place in many different ways and there is sometimes a complex experience combining all the signs of the complete plunge. There is a sense of going in or deep down, a feeling of the movement towards the inner depths; there is often a stillness, a pleasant numbness, a stiffness of the limbs. This is the sign of the consciousness retiring from the body inwards under the pressure of a force from above,—that pressure stabilising the body into an immobile support of the inner life, in a kind of strong and still spontaneous *asana*. There is a feeling of waves surging up, mounting to the head,

which brings an outer unconsciousness and an inner waking. It is the ascending of the lower consciousness in the Adhara to meet the greater consciousness above. It is a movement analogous to that on which so much stress is laid in the Tantrik process, the awakening of the Kundalini, the Energy coiled up and latent in the body and its mounting through the spinal cord and the centres (*cakras*) and the Brahmarandhra to meet the Divine above. In our Yoga it is not a specialised process, but a spontaneous uprush of the whole lower consciousness sometimes in currents or waves, sometimes in a less concrete motion, and on the other side a descent of the Divine Consciousness and its Force into the body. This descent is felt as a pouring in of calm and peace, of force and power, of light, of joy and ecstasy, of wideness and freedom and knowledge, of a Divine Being or a Presence—sometimes one of these, sometimes several of them or all together. The movement of ascension has different results : it may liberate the consciousness so that one feels no longer in the body, but above it or else spread in wideness with the body either almost non-existent or only a point in one's free expanse; it may enable the being or some part of the being to go out from the body and move elsewhere, and this action is usually accompanied by some kind of partial *samadhi* or else a complete trance; or it may result in empowering the consciousness, no longer limited by the body and the habits of the external nature, to go within, to enter the inner mental depths, the inner vital, the inner (subtle) physical, the psychic, to become aware of its inmost psychic self or its inner mental, vital and subtle physical being and, it may be, to move and live in the domains, the planes, the worlds that correspond to these parts of the nature. It is the repeated and constant ascent of the lower consciousness that enables the mind, the vital, the physical to come into touch with the higher planes up to the supramental and get impregnated with their light and power and

influence. And it is the repeated and constant descent of the Divine Consciousness and its Force that is the means for the transformation of the whole being and the whole nature. Once this descent becomes habitual, the Divine Force, the Power of the Mother begins to work, no longer from above only or from behind the veil, but consciously in the Adhara itself, and deals with its difficulties and possibilities and carries on the Yoga.

Last comes the crossing of the border. It is not a falling asleep or a loss of consciousness, for the consciousness is there all the time: only it shifts from the outer and physical, becomes closed to external things and recedes into the inner psychic and vital part of the being. There it passes through many experiences and of these some can and should be felt in the waking state also; for both movements are necessary, the coming out of the inner being to the front as well as the going in of the consciousness to become aware of the inner self and nature; but for many others the ingoing movement is indispensable. Its effect is to break or at least to open and pass the barrier between this outer or instrumental and that inner which it very partially strives to express and to make possible in future a conscious awareness of all the endless riches of possibility and experience and new being and new life that lie untapped behind the veil of this small and very blind and limited material personality which men erroneously think to be all of themselves. It is the beginning and constant enlarging of this deeper and fuller and richer awareness that is accomplished between the inward plunge and the return from this inner world to the waking state.

The sadhak must understand that these experiences are not mere imaginations or dreams but actual happenings, for even when, as often occurs, they are formations only of a wrong or misleading or adverse kind, they have still their power as formations and must be understood before they can be rejected and abolished. Each inner experience is

perfectly real in its own way,—although the values of different experiences differ greatly,—but it is with the reality of the inner self and the inner planes. It is a mistake to think that we live physically only, with the outer mind and life. We are all the time living and acting on other planes of consciousness, meeting others there and acting upon them, and what we do and feel and think there, the forces we gather, the results we prepare have an incalculable importance and effect, unknown to us, upon our outer life. Not all of it comes through, and what comes through takes another form in the physical—though sometimes there is an exact correspondence; but this little is at the basis of our outward existence. All that we become and do and bear in the physical life is prepared behind the veil within us. It is therefore of immense importance for a Yoga which aims at the transformation of life to grow conscious of what goes on within these domains, to be master there and be able to feel, know and deal with the secret forces that determine our destiny and our internal and external growth or decline.

It is equally important for those who want that union with the Divine without which the transformation is impossible. The aspiration could not be realised if you remained bound by your external self, tied to the physical mind and its petty movements. It is not the outer being which is the source of the spiritual urge; the outer being only undergoes the inner drive from behind the veil. It is the inner psychic being in you that is the bhakta, the seeker after the union and the Ananda, and what is impossible for the outer nature left to itself becomes perfectly possible when the barrier is down and the inner self in the front. For, the moment this comes strongly to the front or draws the consciousness powerfully into itself, peace, ecstasy, freedom, wideness, the opening to light and a higher knowledge begin to become natural, spontaneous, often immediate in their emergence.



Once the barrier breaks by the one movement or the other, you begin to find that all the processes and movements necessary to the Yoga are within your reach and not as it seems in the outer mind difficult or impossible. The inmost psychic self in you has already in it the Yogin and the bhakta and if it can fully emerge and take the lead, the spiritual turn of your outward life is predestined and inevitable. In some it has already built a deep inner life, Yogic and spiritual, which is veiled only because of some strong outward turn the education and past activities have given to the thinking mind and lower vital parts. It is precisely to correct this outward orientation and take away the veil that he has to practise the Yoga. Once the inner being has manifested strongly whether by the inward-going or the outward-coming movement, it is bound to renew its pressure, to clear the passage and finally come by its kingdom. A beginning of this kind is the indication of what is to happen on a greater scale hereafter.

5-9-1931.

*Sri Aurobindo*

# The Body Human

BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

The human frame is a miracle of creation. It would not be far wrong to say that the whole trend of physical evolution has been to bring out this morphological marvel. It has not been a very easy task for Nature to raise a living creature from its original crawling "crouching slouching" horizontal position to the standing vertical position which is so normal and natural to the human body. Man has proportionately a larger cranium with a greater and heavier content of the grey substance in comparison with the (vertebral) column upon which it is set; his legs too have to carry a heavier burden. And yet how easy and graceful his erect posture! It is a balancing feat worthy of the cleverest rope-dancer. Look at a bear or even at a chimpanzee standing and moving on its hind legs; what an uncouth ungainly gait, forced and ill at ease! He is more natural and at home in the prone horizontal position. The bird was perhaps an attempt at change of position from the horizontal to the vertical: the frame here attained an angular incline (c.f. *tiryak*, as the bird is called in Sanskrit), but to maintain even that position it was not possible to increase or enlarge the head. It is not idly that Hamlet exclaims:

"What a piece of work is man! . . . how infinite in faculty . . . in form and moving how express and admirable . . . the beauty of the world . . . the paragon of animals!"

The perfection of the anatomical and morphological structure in man consists precisely in its wonderful elasticity—the 'infinite faculty' or multiple functioning referred to by Shakespeare. This is the very characteristic character of man both with regard to his physical and psychological make-up. The other species are, every one of them, more or less, a specialised formation; we have there a closed system, a fixed and definite physical mould and pattern of life. A cat or a crow of a million years ago, like 'the immemorial elm' was not very different from its descendant of today; not so with man. I mean, the human frame, in its general build, might have remained the same from the beginning of time, but the uses to which it has been put, the works that have been demanded of it are multifarious, indeed of infinite variety. Although it is sometimes stated that the human body too has undergone a change (and is still undergoing) from what was once heavy and muscular, tall and stalwart, with a thicker skeletal system, towards something lighter and more delicate. Also an animal,

like the plant, because of its rigidity of pattern, remains unchanged, keeping to its own geographical habitat. Change of climate meant for the animal a considerable change, a sea-change, a change of species, practically. But man can easily—much more easily than an animal or a plant—acclimatise himself to all sorts of variable climates. There seems to be a greater resilience in his physical system, even as a physical object. Perhaps it contains a greater variety of component elements and centres of energy which support its versatile action. The human frame, one may say, is like the solar spectrum that contains all the colour vibrations and all the lines characteristic of the different elements. The solar sphere is the high symbol for man.

The story runs (Aitareya Upanishad) that once the gods wished to come down and inhabit an earthly frame. Several animal forms (the cow, the horse) were presented to them one after another, but they were not satisfied, none was considered adequate for their habitation. At last the human frame (with its conscious personality) was offered to them and immediately they declared that that was indeed the perfect form they needed—*sukritam vateti*—and they entered into it.

The human frame is the abode of the gods ; it is a temple of God, as we all know. But the most significant thing about it is that the gods alone do not dwell there : all beings, all creatures crowd there, even the ungodly and the undivine. The Paśu (the animal), the Piśācha (the demon), the Asura (the Titan) and the Deva (the god) all find comfortable lodging in him—there are many chambers indeed in this mansion of the Lord. Man was made after the image of God and yet Lucifer had access into it and all his host with him. This duality of the divine and the undivine, the characteristic mark of human nature as it is, presents a field and a labour through which man's progress has to be worked out. The soul, the divine flame, has been placed in Ignorance, that is to say, what is apparent Ignorance, the frame of Matter, just because this Matter in Ignorance is to be smelted, purified, given its original and intrinsic substance, shape and character. The human person in its actual form is not obviously something absolutely perfect and divine. The type, the norm it represents is divine, but it has been overlaid with all obscure and base elements—it has to be washed and cleaned thoroughly, salvaged and reconditioned. The dark ungodly elements mar and vitiate ; they must be removed on the one hand, but on the other, they point out and test the salvaging work that has to be done and is being done.

Man is always at the cross-roads. This is his especial difficulty and this is also his unique opportunity. His consciousness has a double valency, in contradistinction to the animal's which is, it can be said, monovalent, in that it is amoral, has not the sense of divided loyalty and hence the merit of choice. The movements of the animal follow

a fixed stereotyped pattern, it has not got to deviate from the beaten track of its instincts. But man with his sense of the moral, of the good, of the progressive is at every step of his life faced with a dilemma, has to pause at a parting of the ways, always looks before and after and is puzzled at a *cas de conscience*. That, we have said, has been made for him the condition of growth, of a conscious and willed change with an ever increasing tempo towards perfect perfection. That furnishes the occasion and circumstance by which he rises to divinity itself, becomes the Divine. He becomes the Divine thus not merely in the own home of the Divine, but on all the levels of the manifestation: all the planes of consciousness with all the hierarchy of beings—powers and personalities—find a new play of harmony, a supreme and global fulfilment in the transfigured human vehicle. The frame itself that encases the human consciousness acts as a living condenser: the very contour in its definiteness seems to exert a pressure towards an ever larger and higher synthesis, or, it may be compared to a kind of field of force (Einsteinian, for example) that controls, regulates, moves and configures all elements within its range. The human frame even as a frame possesses a magic virtue.

Vaishnavism sees the Divine as a human person, the human person *par excellence*. Krishna's body is a radiant form of consciousness (*chinmaya*), no doubt, but it is as definite, determinate and concrete as the physical body, it is the physical itself but in its true substance. And its exquisiteness consists in its being human in form. The Vedantin's Maya does not touch it, it is beyond the illusory consciousness. For they say Goloka stands above Brahmaloaka.

The Christian conception of God-man is also extremely beautiful and full of meaning. God became man: He sent down upon earth his own and only Son to live among men as man. This indeed is His supreme Grace, His illimitable love for mankind. It is thus, in the words of the Offertory, that He miraculously created the dignity of human substance, holding Himself worthy to partake of our humanity. This carnal sinful body has been sanctified by the Christ having assumed it. In and through Him—his divine consciousness—it has been strained and purified, uplifted and redeemed. He has anointed it and given it a place in Heaven even by the side of the Father. Again, Mary—symbolising the earth or body consciousness, as Christian mystics themselves declare—was herself taken up bodily into the heavenly abode. The body celestial is this very physical human body cleared of its dross and filled with the divine substance. This could have been so precisely because it was originally the projection, the very image of God here below in the world of Matter. The mystery of Transubstantiation repeats and confirms the same symbology. The bread and wine of our secular body became the flesh and blood of the God-Man's body. The human frame is, as it were, woven into the

very fabric of God's own truth and substance. The human form is inherent in the Divine's own personality. Is it mere anthropomorphism to say like this? We know the adage that the lion, were he self-conscious and creative, would paint God as a super-lion, that is to say, in his own image. Well, the difference is precisely here, that the lion is not self-conscious and creative. Man creates—not man the mere imaginative artist but man the seer, the Rishi—he expresses and embodies, represents faithfully the truth that he sees, the truth that he is. It is because of this “conscious personality”, referred to in the parable of the Aitareya Upanishad, that God chose the human form to inhabit.

This is man's great privilege that, unlike the animal, he can surpass himself (the capacity, we may note, upon which the whole Nietzschean conception of humanity was based). Man is not bound to his human nature, to his anthropomorphism, he can rise above and beyond it, become what is (apparently) non-human. Therefore the Gita teaches: By thy self upraise thy self, lower not thy self by thy self. Indeed, as we have said, man means the whole gamut of existence. All the worlds and all the beings in all the worlds are also within his frame; he has only to switch or focus his consciousness on to a particular point or direction and he becomes a particular type in life. Man can be the very supreme godhead or at the other extreme a mere brute or any other intermediary creature in the hierarchy extending between the two.

The Divine means the All: whatever there is (manifest or beyond) is within Him and is Himself. Man too who is within that Divine is the Divine in a special way: for he is a replica or epitome of the Divine containing or embodying the three-fold status and movement of the Divine—the Transcendent, the Cosmic and the Individual. He is co-extensive with the Divine. Only, the Divine is conscious, supremely conscious, while Man is unconscious or at best half-conscious. God has made himself the world and its creatures, the transcendental has become the material cosmos, true; but God has made himself Man in a special sense and for a special purpose. Man is not a fabrication of the Lower Maya, a formation thrown up in the evolutionary course by a temporary idea in the Cosmic Mind and developed through the play of forces; on the other hand, it is a typical reality, a Real-Idea—a formation of the original truth-consciousness, the Divine's own transcendental existence. Man is the figure of the Divine Person. The Impersonal become or viewed as the Personal takes up the human aspect, the human, that is to say, as its original prototype in the superconscience.

The conception of a personal immortality—the impersonal is naturally always immortal, there is no problem here—of a physical immortality even attains a significant value looked at from this stand-

point. The urge for immortality is not merely a wish to continue indefinitely an earthly life, because of its pleasures or because of an unreasoning attachment; it means regaining and establishing the immortal body that one has or that one is essentially and potentially. The body seeks to be immortal, for it contains and secretly is its immortal Formal Cause (to make use of an Aristotelian term). The materialisation of an immortal being and figure of being—that is the consummation demanded of human life on earth.

The spirit, the pure self in man is formless; but his soul—the spirit cast into the evolutionary mould in manifestation—has a form: it possesses a personal identity of its own. Each soul or Psyche is a contoured consciousness, as it were: it is not a vague indefinite charge of consciousness, but consciousness having magnitude and dimensions. And the physical body is a visible formula, a graph of that magnitude, an image—a faithful image or shadow thrown upon the wall of this cave of earthly life, of a reality above and outside, as Plato conceived the phenomenon. And the human appearance too is an extension or projection of an inner and essential reality which brings out or takes up that configuration when fronting the soul in its evolutionary march through terrestrial life. A mystic poet says:

All dreams of the soul  
End in a beautiful man's or woman's body<sup>1</sup>—

This is not the utterance of a mere profane consciousness, such also is the experience of a deeper spiritual truth. For the Divine in one of its essential aspects is Ardhanarishwara, the original transcendental Man-Woman. And we feel and almost see that it is a human Face to which our adoration goes when we hear another mystic poet chant for us the *mantra*:

Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire  
thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. B. Yeats: "The Wild Swans at Coole".

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo: "The Bird of Fire".



# Sphoṭa and the Spoken word

BY T. V. KAPALI SASTRY.

When we look closely into the original character of human speech and make an attempt to appreciate the potency of linguistic expression, Sanskrit language and standard authors on Sanskrit Grammar lend us a powerful helping hand leading us to deliberate upon the psychological and spiritual element in the very act of human speech. We find that some of the precepts of Sanskrit Grammar are capable of universal application and are based on principles that govern the laws of the origin and development of word-sound. In these ancient and original authorities we are confronted with profound ideas that are thought-stimulants and urge the mind to plumb deeper and discover the bases on which they are justifiably conceived. The philosophical implications are often far-reaching when we consider their views on the question of word in relation to its meaning, or on the psychological process involved in the expression of significant sounds, or on the spiritual character at the source as distinguished from the external, the physical and effectual aspect of human speech.

Here in a brief compass we shall consider the question of Sphoṭa, one of those concepts of Sanskrit Grammar which has a deep philosophic background and spiritual significance, and goes a long way to enable us to grasp the characteristic features of the language of a remote past, of an original epoch—the language which has come down to us in the form of *mantras*, the Ṛks of the R̥g Veda. It would be helpful to start with some of the rudiments of Sanskrit Grammar and note the manner of investigation undertaken by these ancient thinkers. To begin with:

In the nineteenth century European scholars made the startling discovery that many thousands of words can be resolved into a smaller number of roots. The guiding light in the endeavour was their knowledge of Sanskrit. But in the very dawn of Aryan history the same result, and much more in the line, was achieved by Sanskrit grammarians of whom Pāṇini is the last notable name—notable for the complete system of Grammar that he has bequeathed to us. For all the originality and skill in devising the technique for building the system on scientific basis, Pāṇini would have remained a sealed casket, had not Patañjali given us the *Mahābhāṣya*, the great Commentary on the aphorisms of Aṣṭādhyāyī. With Patañjali Grammar is a regular Science. His work is a monument of critical acumen. It is



here that we learn that the rules of Sanskrit Grammar unfold the laws that regulate the growth and formation of word-sounds, of linguistic forms. Here, in these rules as explained by Patañjali with illustrations taken from life, we have concise formulæ of the science of human speech itself. In fact, it is the discovery of the Mahābhāṣya in the last century that gave birth to the Science of language.

Grammar presupposes the existence of a language which has reached a stage of development quite enough to produce literary records representing a vast field of knowledge. In the case of Sanskrit the origins of Grammar are traced to the earlier Vedic literature as well as to classical Sanskrit, to popular usage. Patañjali is quite clear about the material he works on--words that are Vedic and those that are found in popular usage, *Veda* and *Loka*; for it is these that afford the basis of grammatical speculations. Patañjali holds, as does Yāska, the author of Nirukta before him, that many grammatical concepts<sup>1</sup> are imbedded in the *mantras* and they both quote the Ṛk 'catvāri Vāk parimitā padāni' of Dīrghatamas<sup>2</sup>, stating that the *catvāri* refers to the well-known four parts of speech, namely, Nāma, Ākhyāta, Upasarga and Nipāta (noun, verb, preposition and particle). Patañjali quotes the Ṛk of Vāmadeva<sup>3</sup>, "The great God, the Bull (of Speech) has four horns, three feet, two heads, seven hands, fastened thrice (or in three places) roars aloud, possessing, entered into the mortals", explaining that the four horns and others are respectively the four parts of speech, the three divisions of time, the two kinds of word (the uncreate and the created), the seven cases, the three places (chest, throat and head) that take part in producing the spoken word.

A study of the Mahābhāṣya will show that the Sanskrit grammarians solved some of the fundamental problems of Philology and discovered certain principles of spontaneous growth followed consciously or otherwise in the utterance of significant speech. Patañjali's method follows a twofold principle. Discovering a rule by generalisation and finding out special cases and particularising them--this is a principle governing the method, *sāmānyena utsargalī viśeṣeṇa apavādaḥ*; another principle that is complementary to it is

<sup>1</sup> For instance, the principle of *sandhi* or euphonic change is quite known from early times, as is clear from the fact that the *mantras* are recited in *saṁhitā* form in all rituals and Vedic worship and prayer, while the *pada-pāṭha* is taught later for the purpose of fixing the relation of words in the construction of the sentence. A scrutiny of the rules of *sandhi* in Sanskrit Grammar will hardly fail to impress upon us the intimate relation of Phonology to Grammar.

<sup>2</sup> Rg Veda I. 164-45.

<sup>3</sup> चत्वारि शृङ्गा त्रयो अस्य पादा द्वे शीर्षे सप्त हस्तासो अस्य ।

त्रिधा बद्धो वृषभो रोहवीति महो देवो मर्त्या आविवेश ॥ ऋग्वेद IV. 58.3.

There are, indeed, other interpretations of this Rk. Sāyana in his commentary on this Rk says that five interpretations are possible as five deities, Yajña-Agni, Sūrya and others are possibly addressed and that he has taken it to mean as referring to Yajña-Agni. He says that Śāṅkikas, grammarians, interpret it as referring to Śabda Brahman.

that of Agreement and Difference, *Anvaya* and *Vyatiṛeka*. Let us take a group of similar words—ghaṭah, ghaṭena, ghaṭāt, pacati, pacataḥ, apākṣīt. By agreement, *anvaya*, we can find the common element *ghaṭa* in the first group and *pac* in the second. This unaltered element is termed *Prakṛti*. By difference, *vyatiṛeka*, the uncommon elements *ina āt ti taḥ* are found; they are liable to variation and are termed *Pratyaya*. This is the process by which Sanskrit grammarians could successfully resolve the words and fix the recognised correct expressions in the language—*Siddham tu anvaya-vyatiṛekābhyām*. The four parts of speech recognised by the grammarians since the Vedic age have been already referred to. Prepositions are always joined to roots and they bring out their hidden meanings, according to some grammarians; there are others who do not concur in this view or among themselves. In the case of particles also divergent views are held. Without dilating on this question we shall pass on to consider the nature of Ākhyātas, verbs from which all nouns are generally derived. There are certain names which are not derivable *Avyutpādyā* according to Pāṇini whom Patañjali follows. All names are derivable, even proper names, according to Śākaṭāyana to whom is ascribed the authorship of Uṇādi sūtras which somehow manage to derive words that are apparently underivable. Yāska seems to have a partiality for Śākaṭāyana whom he quotes or follows in giving the derivation of words. That is how quite often he looks fantastic in his derivation of words, while his work as a whole is indispensable and of utmost importance for Vedic studies.

Now let us take up the question of *prakṛti*, the uninflected state of a word, noun or verb. Though the *prakṛti* is said to be twofold, that of the noun being termed *prātipadika* and that of the verb, *dhātu*, strictly speaking, it is reducible to only one, *dhātu*, since all nouns are generally derived from *dhātus*. What exactly is the significance of *dhātu*? In the *Mahābhāṣya* (Pāṇ. 1.3.1.) Patañjali discusses this question and states that *dhātu* is expressive of *Kriyā*, action and that it expresses *Bhāva*. But by *bhāva* we understand existence, *sattā*, not action. How can we reconcile the two—*kriyā* and *bhāva*? We have to bear in mind that in Grammar when we speak of *bhāva* we use it to denote the state or condition of a thing; the abstract form of *ghaṭa*, pot, is *ghaṭatva*, potness—the state of being a *ghaṭa* which is at the same time the intrinsic quality, the special property by which *ghaṭa* is distinguished from all that is not *ghaṭa*; therefore this *ghaṭatva* is the *jāti*, the class element common to all *ghaṭas*. But all objects which are signified by words are understood by us to exist; and existence or *sattā* is *jāti* or class. Thus *bhāva* or *sattā* is expressed by *dhātu*. But the root is said to be expressive of *kriyā*, action. How can *bhāva* or *sattā* be taken for *kriyā*? The grammarians say that there is action involved in all existences. Every thing is in a state of

flux, *na hi kaścīt swasmin ātmani muhūrtaṁ avatiṣṭhate* (there is nothing that subsists in its own form for a moment). Every bhāva undergoes a sixfold change *ṣaḍbhāva-vikārah*, according to the ancient grammarians. It is not the classification of vikāra, change, into six divisions that is important. It is the constant change to which bhāva (every thing existent in the world) is subject that is what is to be recognised. In fact the word *jagat* (world) itself connotes that incessant change is what characterises the world, *gacchati iti jagat*.

It must be noted that when Patañjali says that dhātu is expressive of bhāva, bhāva-vacano dhātuḥ, he means "becoming"; bhāva is bhāvanā, upādānā kriyā. It is derived from bhū of the tenth conjugation meaning 'to produce'.<sup>4</sup> And bhāvanā (becoming) implies action. If existence in the world of objects is bhāva, or *becoming*, the word, the name, that signifies the object has kriyā implicit in it. Every thing is a becoming, bhāva, which is bhāvanā; every name that signifies it carries with it bhāva-vacana or kriyā-vacana which is termed dhātu. Thus we come to appreciate the dictum that roots are the origins of words, dhātavaḥ śabdāyonaḥ. Dhātu is the radical element that is left unaltered by the analysis of the word. When the formative elements are separated from the word, by the process of elimination, *apoddhāra*, what remains irreducible is the dhātu, called the root, the seed-sound, which may be called the phonological type. Therefore words originally bore the stamp of their radical or derivative significance, and they are called *yaugika*. When such words gain currency in fixed senses and become conventional, they are called *yogyārūḍha*. They have a fixed sense without losing their derivative significance. Pañkaja signifies lotus flower by convention, though it has not lost its derivative significance, 'born of mud'; and because of the conventional sense holding sway over the derivative, we do not understand the word to mean everything that is born of pañka, mud. Though the radical element originally determined the sense of the word, roots by themselves are not used to convey any meaning; and this is because they are not so found in popular usage or in the Vedic literature which were the field for the Sanskrit grammarian investigating the process of formation of words and discovering the laws, followed consciously or unconsciously by men in their attempt at vocal expression. Grammar discovers the roots, the common elements in groups or families of words. Its purpose is served by a study of the laws followed in speech, by a discovery of the process by which words appear, grow, and assume manifold form, and by determining the rules of correct formations. Though we find and use words in their particular formations to convey our meaning, and not roots which are grammatical concepts having no currency in

<sup>4</sup> उत्पत्त्यर्थात् भवतेर्णिजन्तात् एरच् इति भावः—तत्त्वबोधिनीकारः

linguistic transaction, it does not mean that there is no root at all as a seed-sound.

Now the question arises as to words having definite meanings. Why should *Go*, *cow*, signify the particular quadruped known to the speaker and the hearer? Is it not due to an established convention by which meanings of word-sounds are conveyed and understood? The answer lies in understanding the character of the necessity that was the parent of human speech. If speech were primarily an intellectual necessity, men could agree upon a conventional equivalence between sound and sense, and any sound could mean any sense by common consent. But that does not seem to be the case. Sanskrit grammarians hold that śabda, the word, has śakti, an intrinsic power to convey the sense which is inseparably related to it. There are indeed certain words which are sañjñā śabdās, technical or proper names which are conventional by consent. Again, there is another class of words, such as *Kāka*, *Kokila*, which are vocal reproductions of sounds heard in Nature, śabdānukṛtīḥ. The mimetic urge in the human creature is a living voice that motivates the kind of nervous response to the stimulus of the environment—a response that translates itself into vocal expression. Intellectual development in the human race may impose itself upon, subordinate or subdue the innate imitative tendency in human nature, but its natural disposition to reproduce is a primal factor which is as much nervous and vital as psychological. Human language itself in the beginning was a natural expression in terms of vocal sound, reacting to the sensations and feelings evoked by the forces of the environment or impelled by subjective phenomena. Apart from the element of mimesis in the primitive vocal expression, the word-sound has a natural power to convey the sense. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "It started from an indefinable quality or property in the sound to raise certain vibrations in the life-soul of the human creature, in his sensational, emotional, his crude mental being . . . . Words had not only a real and vivid life of their own, but the speaker was more conscious of it than we can possibly be with our mechanised and sophisticated intellects."

The question of word, meaning and their relation is subjected to subtle scrutiny and discussed in great detail by all schools of Indian thought.<sup>5</sup> From the difference in their standpoints arises the difference

<sup>5</sup> Grammarians hold that śabda in the sense of letter, varṇa is kārya, not eternal. It may be noted here that according to Mīmāṃsakas śabda in the sense of varṇa, letter, is eternal, is manifested by the effort of the speaker and ceases to be audible the moment after the effort ceases. The Nyāya schools oppose this view holding that śabda is not eternal, is produced and destroyed.

Again, as regards the meaning of a word, Grammarians follow Patañjali whose well-known dictum is "Fourfold is the currency of words" (Catuṣṭayī śabdānām pravṛttiḥ). Jāti (class, universal), Kriyā (action), Guṇaḥ (quality), Dravyam (substance, individual or vyakti)—these are the four in which the denotation of a word is current. In Sāhitya (Rhetoric and Poetics) men of letters are loyal to the Vaiyākaraṇas. But the Mīmāṃsakas hold that the denotation of śabda is

in their conclusions with the inevitable controversies which need not engage our attention here. What we propose to do is to present the position of Grammarians and make an attempt to evaluate the theory of śabda in the light of ancient Indian wisdom, of the Vedic and Āgmic teachings, and appreciate the philosophic basis of the concept of Sphoṭa.

Let us at the outset state in clear terms what is meant by śabda. In Sanskrit, any sound, the sound of a drum or the sound of a syllable in articulate speech is denoted by śabda, dhvanyātmaka and varṇāt-maka ; it is the latter that is the subject of our enquiry. We use it in the sense of a word, vocal sound, *vāk*. In all things that are expressed by vāk, speech, there are two factors we have to distinguish clearly in order to avoid confusion and arrive at the real character of śabda. There is, first, the external aspect, the audibility, the mere sound ; the other factor is the subtler which is the essential sound element, vibrant with the meaning natural to it, not audible to the physical hearing, but clothed in the audible sound through which it expresses itself. The physical and the instrumental aspect is the formal sound *dhvani* which is a quality of the essential inner sound, śabda, which is itself sensible, carries sense with it, and is manifested every time a word is heard or uttered. The essential factor in speech is the real śabda, called sphoṭa by the grammarians, and the outwardly audible sound is dhvani, a quality of the former, sphoṭaḥ śabdaḥ dhvaniḥ śabdaguṇaḥ.<sup>6</sup> Dhvani is what manifests the śabda which is sphoṭa—the former is vyañjaka and the latter, vyañgya.

Accordingly, grammarians divide śabda into two kinds, *kārya* and *nitya* ; *kārya* is what is produced and *nitya* is what is not produced, but is permanent, continual, fixed or eternal. It is not unoften that confusion has clouded the import of the statement '*nityaḥ śabdaḥ*'. Often *nitya* is translated "eternal" in the sense of "indestructible", "immutable", *avicālī*, *kūṭastha* etc. In this context, Patañjali, in the first Āhnika of the Mahābhāṣya explains the various senses in which *nitya* is used and adds that words are not produced by men, just as a potter does a pot.<sup>7</sup> Kaiyaṭa's sensible remarks on the *nityatā* of śabdas

jāti, class, and nothing else. As is to be expected, the Naiyāyikas refute this, stating that individual qualified by class, the universal (jāti-viśiṣṭa-vyakti) is denoted by a word. This is only a broad statement with reference to the difference in views held by various schools on the question of śabda and artha, word and meaning. There are many more views on the subject held by authors who differ among themselves, though they may belong to the same school. In the course of the last twenty centuries there has not been a work or author worth the name who has not paid considerable attention to the theory of śabda-artha. Pundits are often so absorbed in the subject that even today some one is writing a commentary on some ancient author, though not on Nyāya in Navadvīp, certainly on Mīmāṃsa in Madras, somewhere in the south.

<sup>6</sup> Patañjali on Pāṇini I. 1. 70.

<sup>7</sup> अर्थमर्थमुपादाय शब्दान् प्रयुजते । नैषां निवृत्तौ यत्नः क्रियते ।

तथा—घटेन कार्यं करिष्यन् कुम्भकारकुलं गत्वा आह कुरु घटम्...(महाभाष्यम् प्रथमाह्निकम्)

are noteworthy. He says that words are there from an unknown past, handed down to us through a succession of elders.<sup>8</sup> Words and their meanings and therefore their relation, are not created by any one ; Kaiyaṭa explains that they are natural, come down to us in an uninterrupted flow.<sup>9</sup> They are continual, fixed, steady, *dhruva*, and in this sense, *nitya*.<sup>10</sup> Words in their subtle sound-forms arise in the indivisible, permanent, one (*akhaṇḍa*, *nitya*, *eka*) vibrant voice within, called *sphoṭa*. Every time a word is pronounced to convey a meaning, the intelligent principle within (which is vibrant and expressive) takes the form of that meaning.<sup>11</sup> The *dhvani* of the word is the instrument used to manifest the sensible word, *arthavacchabda*, the *sphoṭa*. In itself, it is permanent and luminous, and when a *dhvani* stimulates it, it responds and illuminates. It is both *grāhya* and *grāhaka* i.e. it is intelligent, makes words intelligible. (*Sphuṭati prakāśate arthaḥ asmāditi sphoṭaḥ; sphuṭyate vyajyate varṇairiti sphoṭaḥ*). As it encases in a way the meaning, the idea, it is said to manifest the *artha*, object or sense, *grāhaka*. As it is itself manifested by words that are uttered and audible, it is *grāhya*, the *vyāṅgya śabda*.

We have mentioned the two aspects of *śabda*, *dhvani* and *sphoṭa* ; but *sphoṭa* itself has two aspects as stated above ; it is manifested by utterances, and makes known the sense that is inalienable from it. And this fact we have to bear in mind in view of its equation with the Eternal Word, *Nityā vāk*, urged by reputed grammarians to which we would presently refer.

Thus far the position of the grammarians is intelligible, when we look at speech in its psychological aspect. Those who oppose the *sphoṭa* theory take their stand on the word in its external aspect and rightly consider *śabda* in their sense of the word as *anītya*, as do the *Naiyāyikas* ; or even when it is stated to be eternal "nitya" as is done by the *Mīmāṃsakas*, it is in the sense of eternality of every letter, the most outward form of *śabda*. They all refute the *sphoṭa-vāda*,<sup>12</sup> from

<sup>8</sup> शब्दस्य व्यवहारः अनादिब्रह्मपरम्पराव्युत्पत्तिपूर्वक इति शब्दानां नित्यत्वम्—कैयटः

<sup>9</sup> प्रवाहनित्यत्वादर्थस्य नित्यत्वम्—कैयटः

<sup>10</sup> अव्ययात् त्यप् (Pāṇini, IV. 1.104) वार्तिकम् त्यन्नेर्ध्वे ।

<sup>11</sup> यदा यदा शब्द उच्चारितस्तदा तदा अर्थाकारा बुद्धिरुपजायते—कैयटः ।

<sup>12</sup> The *Sphoṭavādin* does not accept the *varṇa* theory of the *Nyāya* or *Mīmāṃsaka* school. For he says any letter or all the letters of a word cannot cause the cognition of a thing that corresponds to the word, because every letter, uttered, has but a momentary existence. It is wrong to assume that the final letter of a word aided by the impressions left by the preceding letters produces the cognition of a thing. For mere letters cannot produce the knowledge, convey the intended sense. There must be a permanent form of the word which is suggested or manifested by the utterance of the word which is a letter or a number of letters. This is *Sphoṭa*, the eternal (permanent) impartible, essential *śabda* (*nitya*, *akhaṇḍa*, *vyāṅgya śabda*), while the uttered word is produced, *kārya śabda*, not eternal, *anītya*.

It must be noted in this connection that each word has a *sphoṭa* of its own ; *Mamja*, born of *Mam* and *Martya*, mortal, are different words, have different *sphoṭas* of their own, though they are synonyms.

their different standpoints, and treat it as a groundless assumption, an inadmissible hypothesis—as, according to them, it rejects what is perceived, and fabricates what is not perceived, *dr̥ṣṭānāṇiḥ adṛṣṭakalpanā ca*.

It is difficult to determine the philosophic basis of *sphoṭa* theory as conceived by *Patañjali*. *Pāṇini* perhaps knew it; but there is no mention of it in his work. There is a *sūtra* in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* where the word *sphoṭāyana* occurs;<sup>13</sup> but there it is the name of an *Ācārya* of Grammar. It is suggested by some that the name of that grammarian denotes that he was devoted to the question of *sphoṭa* or that *sphoṭa* was his goal (*sphoṭah ayanam parāyaṇam yasya saḥ*). But *Patañjali* mentions *sphoṭa* more than once and describes it as one, indivisible and eternal. He does not enter into a discussion of the philosophic basis of the theory. He notes and makes observations on the psychological character of speech, and that was more than anything else important to him, for he was the foremost analyst in the field of linguistic science.

It is in the *Vākyapadīya* of *Bhartrhari* that we find the first section, called *Brahmakāṇḍa* treating of the subject of *sphoṭa* as a grammatical concept with a philosophical background. As the title of the section implies, the world of sound, *śabda*, is described here as a manifestation of Brahman, *śabdātmakam Brahma*. Further, the author goes on to say that the world of objects, *arthaprapaṇca* itself is a manifestation of *śabda*, that the universe is born of *chandas*.<sup>14</sup> These verses look a paraphrase of Vedic passages, such as “The Word itself became all the worlds”, *vāgeva viśvā bhuvānani jajñe*. Linking the *sphoṭa* of the grammarian with the soul, he says, “The inner cogniser who abides in the form of the subtle *vāk*, word, manifests himself as *śabda*, in order to express his nature (his own form).”<sup>15</sup> It is in the light of such passages that the statement becomes still more clear that the *sphoṭa* is both *grāhya* and *grāhaka*, “Itself luminous like a lamp, it illuminates others.”<sup>16</sup>

*Bhartrhari* states that the whole world of objects is pervaded by *Mahā-sattā* which is the All Existence as well as the *Mahān Ātmā*, the great Soul. In his view, the import of every sentence is a vivid or illumined conception of this *Mahā-sattā*, (*Vākyārtha eva pratibhā*). If this be the import of every sentence in human speech, it is opposed

<sup>13</sup> *Pāṇini* VI. 1. 123.

<sup>14</sup> शब्दस्य परिणामोऽयमित्यान्नायविदो विदुः ।  
छन्दोभ्य एव प्रथमं मेतद्विश्वं व्यवर्तते ॥

वाक्यपदीयम् I-120.

<sup>15</sup> अथायमान्तरो ज्ञाता सूक्ष्मवागात्मना स्थितः ।  
व्यक्तये स्वस्वरूपस्य शब्दत्वेन विवर्तते ॥

वाक्यपदीयम् I. 112.

<sup>16</sup> ग्राह्यत्वं ग्राहकत्वं च द्वैशक्ती तेजसो यथा ।

Ibid. I. 55.

to our experience, for we do not have or get the sense or feeling of the Mahān Ātmā on hearing a sentence, for example, Devadattaḥ pacati, "Devadatta cooks". Hari's explanation is that the sense of every sentence culminates in *sattā*, that the inner cogniser, already mentioned, who abides in the form of the subtle Vāk, manifests his own form *svarūpa* in the import of every sentence which is *sattā*, being or existence. It is indeed a hard nut to crack when the world of differentiated existence is reduced to Mahāsattā, and the differences in *arthas* and *śabdas* are traced to Para Brahman and Śabda Brahman and ultimately negated. But Hari comes with the illustration of objects seen differently from distances or in darkness, but presenting their real character ultimately when approached in light. This analogy is given to show that sentences are split into words and the latter into their bases and inflectional elements and the process is not real, though necessary to lead to the vākyaārtha.<sup>17</sup>

It is not our purpose to elucidate what all Bhartṛhari has stated on Sphoṭa and Vākyaārtha. It is to illustrate how he has presented the theory of sphoṭa, the above examples were warranted. Nor is it necessary to discuss what later authors have added, much less to examine how far are reliable certain statements with reference to sphoṭa, such as "Om̐kara (Prajāva) is the same as sphoṭa", "Sphoṭa is audible to the yogin when he concentrates in the heart", "The Madhyama nāda is the sphoṭa and vaikharī<sup>18</sup> is the audible speech".

In their zeal to establish the sphoṭa-vāda on what they thought to be stronger grounds, later authors have gone the length of identifying the inner sound (that one hears by closing the ears with fingers) with the sphoṭa, Madhyamā Vāk which again is the Prajāva, the creative word, the śabda Brahman! It is not that we doubt that Nāda is heard in Yoga. Let us leave aside the inward sound that is heard by closing the ears, or in ordinary Japa; for this is rather too gross and mechanical to merit notice. It is certainly a fact of yogic experience that Nāda is heard in certain lines of yogic practice, not one kind of Nāda, but many kinds; and the Nāda that the yogin hears need not be of a short duration, it can continue for a long time, it can be constant also. But is that the sphoṭa? That is the question. Is that the sphoṭa of which Patañjali speaks when he distinguishes it from *dhvani*? Is that the sphoṭa of which Bhartṛhari speaks as the inner cogniser, Āntaro Jñātā, who takes on the subtle word-form to manifest himself?

Now we shall turn to the Śabda-Brahman with which sphoṭa is equated, or even identified and see how far and in what sense this

<sup>17</sup> यथैव दर्शनैः पूर्वैर्दृष्टं सन्तमसेऽपि वा ।

अन्यथाकृत्य विषयमन्यथावाच्यवस्यति ॥

वाक्यपदीयम् I.89.

<sup>18</sup> Parā, Paśyantī, Madhyamā, and Vaikharī are the forms of Vāk mentioned in the Tantras; they are the Nāda beyond, the causal, the subtle and the audible speech, respectively.



is reasonable. Brahman is the word for the Mantra in the Vedic language. The Veda is called *Brahmakōśa*, since it is the repository of knowledge in the form of *śabda*. The ultimate Truth which is the source and mainstay of world-existence, the supreme Being all-pervasive and beyond and without which there is nothing, is called Brahman in the later portions of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads. Though, as in the Gita, by *śabda-Brahman* the Vedas are meant, the Āgamas (Tantras) and the Purāṇas with the general support of the Vedic wisdom interpret Para Brahman as the supreme Artha and *śabda-Brahman* as the Śakti inherent in it. In other words, if the supreme meaning paramārtha of All-Existence is Īśvara, Īśvarī is the *śabda*, the inseparable Śakti, the Power of manifestation. In Creation, it is said, the *śabda-sṛṣṭi* precedes *Artha-sṛṣṭi*. It is the Creative Word, Vāk, the primordial sound that manifests the world of objects, *artha*. Vāk, *śabda*, is Śakti, the dynamic principle of Creation, the Force of the substance which is the Artha. And without *artha*, *śabda* has nothing to manifest and *artha* is unmanifest without *śabda*. And this certainly corresponds to the ancient truth that Śakti is inseparable from Śiva and has no existence without Him, while He has no manifestation without Her. That is why Sanskrit thinkers use the simile of Sun and sunlight, or Fire and heat to explain the character of Śiva-Śakti union, which, as we have seen, is also the relation of Vāg-artha—a profound truth transparent in the poetic utterance of Kālidāsa in the invocatory verse of his great Poem.

This view, then, makes it clear that what is called *śabda-Brahman* in the sense of Śakti or expressive Force is the efficient cause of world-existence, while the Substance, the material cause is Para Brahman. But when it is used in the sense of Vedas, it is the Primordial Eternal sensible Sound, which is the Immutable repository of Vibrant Intelligence whence spring the Vedas, all words of Wisdom and works. It is signified by the mystic syllable OM, which is as much a symbol as a living word expressive of the "Immutable, supreme Ether or Ākāśa" (*Akṣaram paramam vyoma*). Here again, it is not the external aspect of the letter, but the inner sensible sound OM that raises the necessary set of vibrations to manifest the sense of the Supreme Being, Īśvara, in the consciousness of the utterer and the hearer. Apart from its inherent potency as the Sound-substance of all sounds, Om is used in the Sanskrit language as a word of affirmation and sanction. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad calls it *anujñākṣara*, the word of sanction or approval. In classical Sanskrit and in conversation, it is a word of agreement or affirmation conveying the sense of "O yes". How this syllable of sanction is also the name expressive of Īśvara is an interesting question which need not be discussed here. It is called *Pranava*, because it is highly praised, *prakarṣeṇa nūyate stūyate iti*

pranavaḥ.<sup>19</sup> Undoubtedly, it is this Praṇava, Om that represents the Eternal Word, nityā vāk of the R̥g Veda. The Ṛṣis of that age knew the Word Eternal to which they resorted for the discovery of the Inspired speech to express their truth-visions. Because those words of Inspiration came forth from that Eternal Word, they were not treated as separate from, but adored as identical with that supreme source, the Word of all words. The Ṛṣis speak of the Ṛks as the Eternal Word. The power of the word was a self-evident truth with the Ṛṣis of the R̥g Veda, a fact of their common experience. There are seers who sing the glory of the *mantras* carved by the heart, *Hydā taṣṭān mantrān*; Ṛṣi Paraśara describes the Power of Word: “Our fathers by their word, the Angiras seers, broke the strong and stubborn places, our fathers burst by their cry the rock of the mountain, made within us the path to the Great heaven, discovered the Day and the sun-world and thought-vision and the herds of light.”<sup>20</sup> (Sri Aurobindo’s translation.) The Ṛks of the R̥g Vedā are considered to be direct presentation or truth-forms of the Eternal Word. The seer Virūpa, as is usual with many Ṛṣis of the R̥g Veda, addresses himself thus—“Towards him (Agni), just now luminous in front, Vṛṣan, the showerer (of benefits), O Virūpa, urge the auspicious praise with the Word Eternal.”<sup>21</sup> The Eternal Word in the form of *mantra* is what is meant here, according to the commentator Sāyana.

Dirghatamas, the seer, known for his enigmatic hymns, is for once quite plain in speaking of the Ṛks as located in the Immutable, most High, Ākāśa. Here is the first half of the Ṛk:

“Ṛco akṣare paramē vyoman yasmin devā adhi viśve niṣeduh”  
“The Ṛks abide in the Immutable, supreme, Ether where are seated all the Gods.” (R. V. I. 161.39).

Thus will be seen the sacred character of the Hymns of R̥g Veda. It is because of the internal evidence which is the evidence of the Ṛks themselves referring to the source of their revelation, great authorities and thinkers of ancient times revered the Vedic texts as sacred. In our own times, to the discerning eye of Sri Aurobindo, it (the hymn) is “a means of spiritual progress for himself (the Ṛṣi) and for others. It arose out of his soul, it became a power of his mind, it was the vehicle of his self-expression in some important or even critical moment of life’s inner history. It helped him express the

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Chandogya Upanishad I. 4-5.

One who knows praises the Aksaram, विद्वान् अक्षरं प्रणौति ।  
What is udgitha is praṇava, etc.,

य उद्गीथः स प्रणवः यः प्रणवः स उद्गीथः ओमिति ह्य ष स्वरन्नेति ।

<sup>20</sup> वीलुचिद् दृष्ठा पितरो न उक्थैरद्रिं रुज्जङ्गिरसो रवेण ।

चक्रुर्दिवो बृहतो गातुमस्मे अहः स्वर्षिविदुः केतुमुक्ताः ॥ ऋग्वेद I.71.2.

<sup>21</sup> तस्मै नूनमभिद्यवे वाचा विरूप नित्यया ।

वृष्णे चोदस्व सुष्टुतिम् ॥

ऋग्वेद VIII.64.6.

God in him, to destroy the devourer". These are not "pastoral songs" nor are they invocations to the mere "forces of Nature" as is supposed by modern scholarship supported to some extent by Sāyanacārya's ritualistic and one-sided interpretation of the Vedas. The Vedic poets are seers with a spiritual vision and the *mantras* are inspired words of Truth-vision of these seers who belonged to a remote age, an age of Intuition and direct perception, of living and self-conscious speech when the age of Reason was still far off in the womb of future.

The character of the age determined the character and function of the language. In that far off epoch "The word for the Vedic Ṛṣis is still a living thing, a thing of power, creative and formative. It is not yet a conventional symbol of an idea, but itself the parent and former of ideas. It carries within it the memory of its root, is still conscient of its history". (*Arya*, Vol. I, Pp. 316). From such illuminating passages we can see that the Ṛṣis were not system-builders we are familiar with, not thinkers to whom the realities of subtler existence, of mind and soul are abstractions. To the Vedic seer-poet *draṣṭa Kavīh*, "All experience is real, vivid, sensible, even concrete".

This is the story of the śabda-śakti. Its origins are to be sought in the Vedas, the earliest available records of literary language in the history of mankind. As has been already stated, the felt potency inherent in the word was an experience common to the Ṛṣis, and therefore a recognised fact. When in later ages the original character of speech changed and became more and more conventional, the speech, Vāk, became a servant of the mind, a conventional sign, vocal symbol of an idea. Thinkers, like the Vaiśeṣikas, came with the theory that the convention that particular words shall have particular meanings is God's Will, *Īśvarecchā*. In other words, the relation of word to its meaning is conventional, *sāṅketika*. But it is the school of grammarians that did not accept the mechanical character of speech as the real śabda. It upheld the original nature and function of speech, expounded the śakti, the innate power of the word, and laid stress on the psychological and spiritual factor in all speech. And in interpreting this subtler aspect influenced by the Vedic tradition, it propounded what is called the "Theory of Sphoṭa". In fact, Sphoṭa is not a theory, though one may call it a justifiable assumption for purposes of dialectics.

Before concluding, let us sum up the position of the Sphoṭavādin and draw pointed attention to the salient features of the Sphoṭa that have bearing on language and literature. The Sphoṭavādin holds that a word, whether it is a single letter or a number of letters, can not by virtue of its being a sound-form convey the intended sense but for the fact that there is a permanent form of the word in the subjective being; that the subjective being, the inner cogniser, as related to the world-existence is a constant vibrant Intelligence that assumes the

form of the permanent, impartible word, called Sphoṭa ; that the uttered word is formal and qualitative and points to the real and substantial word which is inseparable from its meaning ; that the qualitative word of letters in which the order of letters is maintained is called *dhvani*, while the real word, śabda, called Sphoṭa to which the former is related is indivisible, has no parts and hence the question of the order of letters does not arise ; that it is the *dhvani* that suggests or manifests the sensible word, śabda ; that what we call synonymous words are, strictly speaking, different words implying minute differences in the meanings conveyed and but for the subtle difference in the senses many words to denote the same idea or object would be without purpose. Broadly, this covers the main conclusions of the grammarians as regards Sphoṭa in its relation to language in general.

But the consequence of the grammarians' conception of Sphoṭa on Literature and Poetics in particular has been far-reaching. Of all the śāstras the prestige of Vyākaraṇa is great, being a limb of the Vedic studies, Vedaṅga. Sanskrit rhetors of high repute have always held the views of Grammarians in reverential esteem. They took the cue from the Sphoṭa behind the veil of *dhvani* and developed their theory of *dhvani* (suggestion) as being the soul of Poetry, *kāvyaśya ātmā dhvaniḥ*. Whoever may be the originator of the theory, it was Ānandavardhana who elaborately dealt with the subject and was supported and followed by powerful critics, from Maṇḍana to Jagannātha. It may not be out of place here to mention that some of their views on Poetry would appear quite modern and deserve to endure as long as Poetry lives and has value for us. These ancient writers on Poetics hold that Poetry need not be in verse and can be in prose as well, that even in verse rhyme is not compulsory. In Sanskrit Poetry where there is indulgence in word-jingling, *citra-kāvya*, while the sonorous word is not commensurate with sense and suggestion, it is considered to be base stuff (*adhama-kāvya*), clownish, vulgarising the high office of Poetry by jugglery in verbiage. Suggestive poetry (*dhvani-kāvya*) is the best form of Poetry. Suggestive of what? Suggestive of truth or idea or fact, of a figure or image, or of *rasa*, what is inadequately translated as flavour. Suggestive Poetry is excellent and ideal because there it is the suggestion, *dhvani* that predominates, while the sound and sense subserve the soul of Poetry. The special function of Poetry is to appeal to the aesthetic soul, *rasika*, steal into the heart profound truths and ideas or awaken it through higher emotions to the Self-delight of the Spirit, the true Rasa of which the *nine rasas* are figures in terms of the emotional mind.

Religious scriptures teach us profound truths indeed ; they instruct us as to what is and what is not to our good ; but they do it as the master commands his servant. Other subordinate texts and

sacred legends of ancient times, instruct and advise ; but they do it as friend advises friend. But Poetry brings about the same result in her peculiar way ; she does not command like a master, as do the Scriptures ; she does not advise like a friend, as do the Purāṇas ; she accomplishes her object by an intimate appeal, as the beloved wins the heart of her lover, by her charm of address and resonant sense, by a pleasing tact of expression laden with suggestions, finding her way straight to the soul of her lover, for his acceptance and delectation. Such is the value and high purpose of Poetry according to Sanskrit rhetoricians.

Thus it will be seen that the Sphoṭa of the Grammarians has played not a small part in the development of the *dhvani* school of thought in poetics. If the Sphoṭa has inspired the *ālaṅkārikas* to discover and describe the character and function of Poetry in the manner stated above, it is itself based upon the great cosmological truth of the Vedic and Tantrik scriptures that it is the Word Eternal and indivisible that creates the world of objects, that all names are varied forms and suggestive signs of the One Name and all forms are different expressions, significant moulds and meanings, of the Sole Supreme Being beyond and behind all names and all forms, Śabda and Artha. If in regard to world-existence it is the view of the Sanskrit Grammarians that all creation is in a state of perpetual flux, *becoming*, as has been earlier shown in dealing with the question of *dhātus* (roots) as *bhāva-vacana* or *kriyā-vacana*, their view of the individual soul in its interchange with the world-surrounding is notable in that it is a cognitive being who reflects, represents, and assumes the subtle sensible form of the Creative Word for the purpose of unfolding himself, the powers of his own being in the manifested existence, as has been shown by an examination of the question of Sphoṭa. In the light of this brief discussion on some of the concepts of Sanskrit grammarians, their spiritual value or philosophic appreciation can be safely left to the judgment of the thoughtful reader.

Sphoṭa, then, is the Vāk, the subtle voice which is the basis of all speech in mind-form, *vāci pratiṣṭitam manah* ; it is not the vāk, speech, of which mind is the mainstay, *manasi pratiṣṭhitā vāk*. Sphoṭa is not a fanciful concept, but a fact of psychological experience, a truth of our spiritual being in evolution. It is the expressional aspect of the soul : it receives the vocal sound vibrations, takes in their sound-essence and sense-values and assimilates them into the subtle sound stuff of its indivisible being. In its responses, it breaks forth surcharged with intelligence, *sphuṭati* and raises subtle vibrations that are later vocalised. In short, it is the inner being, not the soul that is immersed in the unspeakable silence, but the soul that is emergent with a purpose—the purpose of discovering its own being in expression “*vyaktaye sva-svarūpasya*”. Here, in the inner depths, in the etheric

#### SPHOTA AND THE SPOKEN WORD

regions of the Heart, it is the *āntarao jñātā* of Bhartṛhari, the one indivisible permanent śabda of Patañjali ; there, in the Immutable supreme Ākāśa, it is the Śabda Brahman of the Scriptures, the Nityā Vāk of the Ṛg Veda.

# Sri Aurobindo and Kena Upanishad

BY CHARU CHANDRA DUTT

Well-nigh thirty years ago, the Master reviewed this Upanishad at length in the *Arya*. In fifteen brilliant chapters he “considered minutely the bearings of its successive utterances” and strove “to make ‘precise’ to the intelligence the sense of the puissant phrases in which it gives us its leading clues to that which can never be entirely expressed by human speech”. In the limited space available to us we can do no more than give a resumé of these chapters. We shall do so largely in the Master’s own words.

In his commentary of *Isha Upanishad*, Sri Aurobindo had drawn a distinction between the earlier and the later Upanishads and shown that the former were in their line of thought very close to the *Veda* while the latter gradually succumbed to the baneful influence of the doctrine of *Maya* which denied the world completely as illusive and unreal, and pronounced human action to be futile and meaningless. *Kena Upanishad* belongs to the earlier group and reiterates with remarkable vigour that this our terrestrial life, however partial and fragmentary it be, is not unreal and that the path to Supramental perfection lies through the imperfect and semi-obscure mentality of man. The higher consciousness is to be realised in this life and here on earth. “If here one finds it not, great is the perdition.”

In the history of spiritual evolution in India we find three definite periods.—the Age of Intuition, the Age of Reason and the Age of Convention. The first was the Vedic Age when the sage realised Divine Truth by *Ṛuti*, by direct revelation. Later, when through degeneration the *Veda* tended to be a closed book to the new generations, a line of seers sprang into existence who sought to re-discover the lost truth of the ancient scripture by meditation and spiritual experience. These were the Rishis of the Upanishads. By their deep insight and brilliant exposition they dominated their age, and while the authors of the *Brāhmanas* were fixing and developing the ritualistic side of the *Veda* these introspective seers strove to make the Vedic Truth-Consciousness comprehensible to those who wished to be instructed. They did not succeed in re-establishing Vedic thought but they elaborated what is known as the Vedantic scriptures,

and ushered in a new period, that of Reason, which in time culminated in the many schools of philosophy and the various lines of free-thinking which marked this age. All this the Master has not repeated in the present commentary and we have written these few lines merely by way of a very necessary introduction for the ordinary reader. With the third age, that of convention, we are not concerned here except merely to tell our reader that India has already begun to emerge from her blindness and obscurity. A new day has dawned, and even if for a time we are satisfied with the lurid glow of the golden lid that covers the Sun's face, the time is not distant when that lid would be removed and the Sun of Divine Truth shine in all his splendour.

Of the twelve great Upanishads the Master says, "Into the great kingdom of Brahma-Vidya each enters by its own gate, follows its own path or detour, aims at its own point of arrival." Isha and Kena are both concerned with the same grand problem,—the realisation of Immortality. They both seek to determine the relationship of our human consciousness with the universal and the Divine, and to indicate how mortal man can rise out of his present life of division and ignorance, pain and evil, and attain to a state of never-ending Light and Bliss. The sage of Isha closes with an aspiration towards felicity and invokes Agni to lead him by the straight path to eternal bliss. Kena closes with the definition of Brahman as that Delight, Tadvanam, and asks the seeker to worship and seek That as Delight. But there is also a difference. The precise subject of the two is not identical. Isha is concerned with the whole problem of the world, man's life, his actions and his destiny, and determines the relation of Brahman with all these. The end that Kena has set before itself is simpler and narrower. It is to fix the relation between human consciousness and Brahman-Consciousness. The material world and the physical life have scarcely been mentioned; they have been taken for granted. But it has been made clear right at the outset that our earthly life is merely an outward manifestation of an inner and a deeper principle; it is not unreal by any means, but is only an inferior mode, a shadow, of that greater principle. Mind and life are the knowers and the controllers of our external activities. The outside world is to us as the mind and the vital senses perceive it. It is our mind that decides for us our movements in this life. Kena asks, what are in reality these faculties—mind, life and senses; are they the last word, are they the ultimate controllers of our actions? Or, are mind and life merely the outer covering of a larger, deeper and more puissant principle? The Upanishad replies clearly that there is such a mighty principle working in the background. That principle is to man's mind what mind is to matter. Mind knows matter, but matter does not know mind. Likewise That knows mind but mind knows That not. How to rise beyond mind and its instru-



ments, enter into himself and attain to the hidden Brahman-Consciousness becomes then the supreme aim of man.

But if a perfect life of Bliss is possible here on earth, what is the value of our present existence, partial and fragmentary, ignorant and imperfect? Man must obtain his release from the shackles of his mental life and enter into the perfect freedom of the supramental existence. But this release has to come here, in this terrestrial life, *Ihaiva*. The earth is not to be shunned, but transfigured.

For, this Brahman-Consciousness is not a thing that exists outside our being. It is there involved in our life, mind and senses, seeing them, using them and controlling them. It is the supreme enjoyer of the actions of our lower faculties. What victories the cosmic gods win in us are its victories. The might of the gods is only a form of its almighty might. This universe is only a diminished manifestation of its supreme Truth. It is not illusive, not unreal, but the reality of the one Almighty and Blissful Super-conscious. Between that Bliss and the transient joys of this earth there is a world of difference. To seek the All-Bliss with our whole being is the great aim of all *sādhana*. This Brahman-Consciousness, this All-Bliss is the Lord of the Isha, he who dwells in all the transient forms of his own creation.

Kena begins with the question.

केनेषितं पतति प्रेषितं मनः,  
केन प्राणः प्रथमः प्रैति युक्तः ।  
केनेषितां वाचमिमां वदन्ति,  
चक्षुः श्रोत्रं क उ देवो युनक्ति ॥ (१)

By whom missioned falls the mind shot to its mark? By whom yoked does the first life-breath move forward on its path? By whom impelled is this word that men speak? What god sets eye and ear to their workings? (1)

Mind, as we know and feel, is the agent of our ordinary human consciousness. Vital energy, speech and the five senses are instruments of the mind and act by its order. *Prāṇa*, which is our life-breath or vital force acting in the nervous system, is the principal instrument of the phenomenal consciousness, because it is by its various organs of knowledge and action that the mind contacts the outer world. Speech which is an expression of the mind's cognition is but a vibration of sound set up by the outgoing breath passing through the throat and the mouth. That is why the Upanishad begins by asking, what is it within or without us that sends the mind forth on its errand and guides it? *Ko devah?*

According to the ancients the material world is made up of the five *bhūtas* or primordial elements—fire, ether, air, water and earth. Everything that has to do with our physical being was therefore called *Adhibhauta*, elemental. Above this there is that in us which pertains to the gods, called *Adhidaiva*—the subtle forces working in the mental man through his mind and life. But over and above these powers, greater than them and sustaining them, is the power of the Spirit, called *Adhyātma*.

*Adhidaiva* is, then, the subtle in us; it is represented by mind and life as opposed to gross matter. It is there that we have the characteristic action of the cosmic gods. Kena deals principally with the relation between *Adhidaiva* and *Adhyātma*. Mind, life, speech and the senses are, as we know, controlled by the cosmic powers, gods like Agni, Marut and Indra. But is theirs the ultimate control, or is there a mightier force working behind them?

Life-energy is called the first or the supreme breath in this verse. Indian yogic literature mentions five life-currents coursing in the body, of which *Prāṇa* or the breath is the first and the foremost, the other four being more or less dependent on it. It is this life-breath which is constantly bringing the universal energy into the individual's physical system.

*Prāṇa* is called the horse in the Veda. Its various powers draw the chariots of the gods. This imagery is kept up in the first verse here. By whom yoked does the first life-breath move forward? What god set eye and ear to their workings? Who yoked the vital force to the body to lead it forward? We know, the sage implies, that there is a greater force that is working from behind. But what is it, what god?

As we have already noted, it is the life-breath that enables us to speak, to give expression to what the mind thinks. Marut, the air-god of the Veda controls this *prāṇic* energy. Agni, the fire-god, directs all our powers of thought and will. But Marut, Agni and the other gods are but agents or representatives. Whose is the concealed power behind them? The eye sees a form, the ear hears a sound. But both act merely as instruments of the vital force. The vital force acting under the mind's direction contacts the environment through these organs. But, what god concealed behind mind and life really sets them to work? The gods are puissant by His power. They conquer the Titans by His might. Who is He? Who is that eternal Lord?

The momentous question has been asked which will turn man's gaze from the known apparent external little to the unknown and hidden Vast. Once man has so turned his gaze he can no longer remain satisfied with the transitory phenomena of the world.

But why should man look away from earthly life? Even though

it be transient and imperfect he has ever cherished it. Guided by his intelligent mind he has been pursuing so many great ideas, thinking so many noble thoughts, building up so many magnificent structures! No doubt he has had his bouts of pain and disappointment, but he has also known great happiness in this world and has achieved remarkable success in his undertakings. If he is called upon to forsake all this and enter into himself he will undoubtedly ask for a heavy price, a great reward. The Upanishad is prepared to offer him such a reward. He is told that if he goes behind his mind, life and senses he will realise eternal Being, infinite Power, complete Knowledge and radiant Truth. In place of the halting and partial satisfactions of this life he will enjoy a supreme and unending Bliss. In one word, Immortality will be his. This is the sense of the second verse.

श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद्  
वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः ।  
चक्षुषश्चक्षुरतिमुच्य धीराः  
प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृताः भवन्ति ॥ (२)

That which is hearing behind the hearing, mind of the mind, the word behind the speech, that too is life of the life-breath, sight behind the sight. The wise find their release beyond and passing forward from this world they become immortal. (2)

But we have to remember that this immortality is neither an abstraction nor an emptiness. It is the divine transfiguration of all that we are possessed of on the lower plane. Here, below, the mind can give us merely a slowly growing light, consciousness and life; there, the supermind brings us forthwith an eternal and infinite light, a self-aware consciousness and the plenitude of life. What is imperfect on the mental plane attains to perfection above. What is only suggested here is there fulfilled. Yet there is no void or Nirvāṇa on that higher plane: everything earthly is there, but divinely transformed,—the Supreme Mind of the mind, the hidden Life of the life, the ultimate Sense of the senses. In that higher existence we forsake things only in order to get them more completely than ever before. Our mind, here, seeks and seeks but realises nothing; it is only by transcending mind that we can realise the ultimate truth. Here in the frame-work of time and space we are ever trying to raise our consciousness higher and higher; but there above, we become possessed of a consciousness that is essentially immutable, that is utterly beyond the limitation of time and space. This soul-state

beyond darkness and ignorance is our true truth. It is immortality. It is *Tad-vanam*, delight.

Here on earth man seeks to establish influence over his environment but scarcely succeeds owing to his sense of division. There above, in the midst of absolute unity he is the knower, the doer and the supporter. The imperfect man of the terrestrial plane becomes the true Purusha. Down below is the field of the cosmic gods, up above is that of Brahman, the infinite and eternal. Here we strive ever to keep back death, there it is a deathless life that we go to.

This is the reply suggested by the very form of the Rishis' first question. In the Master's words, "the Truth behind mind, life, sense, must be that which controls by exceeding it; it is the Lord." Immortality can be attained only by giving up the sense of separation in being, possession and delight. The method pursued by this Upanishad is different from that of *Isha*. The latter addresses itself principally to the awakened seeker, while *Kena* speaks to the ordinary man still dwelling in the earthly life, not yet awake. That is why the sage approaches the great problem through the lower faculties and their fragmentary action. He first affirms the existence of a deeper, larger and more puissant consciousness behind mind, and then identifies it as Brahman, as our true self,—mind, life, speech and senses being only its lower movements,—transitory principles that the Self has created in the flux of time for its own cosmic play.

Neither our egoism nor our memory is our real self. Sri Aurobindo calls egoism a lynch-pin round which our mind centralises its sensational experiences. Memory does not constitute ego-sense, but it is necessary for the continuance of that sense. Nor is our moral personality the self; it is too pliable and fluctuating, and its only function is to give a sense of fixity to the transient becoming. There is behind all our becoming, all our feeling, a higher principle that originates and determines things. We cannot know it until we step behind the groping and confused action of our mind. Brahman-Consciousness concealed behind our lower faculties is our *Ātman*,—Mind of the mind and Life of the life.

Now, what is the relation between this reality and our phenomenal existence? What is the nature of this higher consciousness? We know it to be beyond the reach of the eye, speech and mind, says the sage in the third verse.

न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति न वाग् गच्छति नो मनः ।

न विद्मो न विजानीमो यथैतदनुशिष्यात् ॥ (३)

There sight attains not, nor speech attains, nor the mind.  
We know not, nor can we discern how one should teach  
of That. (3)

It is easy enough to understand that Brahman-Consciousness, the Lord in us, cannot be thought or expressed, seen or heard, by our ordinary human instruments. But the Upanishad goes deeper and tells us that it is not even dependent on our mind, life and senses for its lordship and activity. It does not think by the mind, live by the life, sense by the senses or express by the speech. These organs are but objects of its supreme consciousness, are but its diminished forms, created by itself.

This view is set forth explicitly in the five verses, 5 to 9, which we shall take up for detailed consideration later on. But, generally speaking, we find that each human faculty is taken up therein, expanded in a separate verse, and each verse emphasised by the exhortation in the second line,

“Know that indeed to be the Brahman, not this which men follow after here.”

In the third verse the sage says of Brahman, “We know not nor can we discern how one should teach of That.” The reason for not knowing appears in the fourth:

अन्यदेव तद्विदितादथो अविदितादधि ।

इति शुश्रुमः पूर्वेषां ये नस्तद् व्याचक्षिरे ॥ (४)

For it is other than the known, and it is above beyond the unknown, so have we heard from the men of old who have declared That to our understanding. (4)

An apparent contradiction appears here which has to be explained. In the second verse, for instance, Brahman-Consciousness is described to be the Mind of the mind, while the next verse tells us clearly that the mind cannot reach it and we know not how one should teach of it. The fourth verse goes farther and says that it is other than the known and is above the unknown. Yet the sixth verse commands us to know it — तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि . Sri Aurobindo in his commentary makes it clear that the Brahman-Consciousness here referred to by the sage is not the essential or absolute Brahman but “the eternal outlook of the Absolute upon the relative”. This outlook is certainly within the reach of the Mind of the mind, the Speech of the speech. We can hope to know it and express it here on earth, in this body, but only by stepping inside ourselves. Hence the injunction to know Brahman in the five verses (5-9). Brahman in its essentiality is not, then, what the sage calls Mind of the mind. It is the Lord immanent in His creation.

The fourth verse, when it describes Brahman as other than the known and above beyond the unknown, clearly implies known and unknown by our human mentality, but certainly not unknowable.

The difference between known and unknown exists only on the mental plane ; it disappears in the higher consciousness where the mutual relationship between the knower and his object is no more, and where sheer identity has taken the place of mental cognition. In this our earthly existence, however, the identity can only be a qualified one. But the path beyond lies through this qualified identity. We have by our sādhanā to eliminate all limits set on our cognition, and come into touch with the Absolute even in this body.

The nature of this sādhanā is indicated by Sri Aurobindo. Into the working of the mind we must constantly try and admit a working higher than itself, till the mind is ready to yield place to the supermind. This preparation to admit a higher faculty has had to be undergone at every previous step in the past evolution of Nature. The process has all along been one of gradual unfolding, a gradual awakening of what was dormant before. The mental man's next step upward will be a conscious one. He has been equipped with necessary faculties, and the light of intuition is ever there to guide him along. When man has awakened his sleeping supermind he will be able to answer the question of the sage in the first verse केनेषितं, by whom missioned? This is as far as we need go here. We shall see in the second chapter the apparent contradiction fully reconciled, and in the last the path to supreme Knowledge indicated.

Verses 5 to 9, referred to above, run as below :—

यद् वाचाऽनभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ (५)

That which remains unexpressed by the word, that by which the word is expressed, know that indeed to be the Brahman, not this which men follow after here. (5)

यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनोमतम् ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ (६)

That which thinks not by the mind, that by which the mind is thought, know that indeed to be the Brahman etc. (6)

यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षूषि पश्यति ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ (७)

That which sees not with the eye, that by which one sees the eye's seeings, know that indeed to be the Brahman etc. (7)

यच्छ्रोत्रेण न शृणोति येन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रुतम् ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ (८)

That which hears not with the ear, that by which hearing is heard, know that indeed to be the Brahman etc. (8)

यत् प्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणीयते ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ (९)

That which breathes not with the breath, that by which life-breath is led forward in its paths, know that indeed to be the Brahman etc. (9)

It should be noted that in these verses the first place is given to speech, the expressive faculty. In the Veda we find that the Word created the forms of the world. This Word that was the creatrix of the universe is above our mental construction. It must be remembered, however, that the forms created by this supreme Word, **नादब्रह्म**, were merely symbols, outward representations, of an inner Reality. That reality is the Brahman itself. Human speech expresses no more than the mental image of the outward symbol created by the supreme Word. The word in the fifth verse, **अनभ्युदितं** "remains unexpressed", means literally "not raised up before the mind". Human speech can raise up before the mind only the presentation of a presentation of the ultimate Reality, never the Reality itself. It can go on creating new mental images but can never seize the Truth underlying a form. Brahman is the Speech of our speech. Human language cannot express it. But it is by Brahman that the faculty of speech is expressed.

Going into the physical aspect of speech we find that it is but a vibration of sound—a vibration created by the pressure of air passing out through our throat and mouth. At first human speech must have been only a spontaneous expression of emotions caused by an object or occurrence. Later on the mind learnt gradually to use it for describing its ideas of and about the object. Physical Science tells us that material sound has the power of creating forms. Simple experiments performed in the laboratory demonstrate this. From the point of view of psychology too we know that speech is a creative force; for, it undoubtedly creates forms of emotion, mental images and impulses of action. This creative effect of speech was extended in the Vedic period by the use of the Mantra. A mantra in theory is born deep down in our being, deeper than the mind, is framed in the heart, then held in the mind and thrown out. It reveals inner

realisations and has a subtle power of creating outer forms, mental and vital as well as physical. Even in our ordinary life we are producing daily by speech vibrations and forms in the world of thought which affect ourselves as well as others. Our mind engrossed in outward phenomena cannot detect all this subtle action. But it is always there. The Vedic sages realised this secret power of the word when they uttered their mantras. A mental vibration and a supramental vibration are similar in action. Only they do their work of creation on two different planes. The Supreme Word, Speech of our speech, is a vibration of the Pure Existent. The Mind of our mind gives it shape and it expresses itself on all planes.

Aum, forming the mystic syllable of the Veda, are the seed sounds of the Word. There are likewise other seed sounds in the Tantras. The Word has its subtle forms which compel the forms of this world. It has also its subtle rhythms which find expression in the rhythm of the universe. "Life itself is a rhythm of God". The seeking of the supreme truth is the *sādhana* of man. The Word behind the speech alone expresses that truth. Human speech at its highest cannot. He who has found the Word has discovered the Truth. In the words of the second verse, he finds his release beyond and passing forward from this world he becomes immortal.

In the sixth verse the sage says that the Mind behind the mind can likewise discover the Supreme Truth; the human mind at its best cannot. What is this higher cognitive faculty? Is there any rational basis for it? We shall see presently that this higher Mind is a necessity that arises from the very nature of mind itself.

According to the ancients, man is essentially a mental being. Modern Science tells us, however, that man is only matter, a physical being. He has, in the course of evolution, developed his mind as a result of the shocks that he has sustained from his environment. After the dissolution of the body, consequently, nothing survives. The whole truth, however, is very much larger than this narrow view. Matter could never have evolved a mind if there had not already existed behind the life and body a latent mentality striving to manifest itself. In the original inconscience there must have been a concealed will ever struggling to come out and control the life and the form. If mind and will had not been already there, the mental being could never have become manifest. Now, where was this mind concealed? In matter itself, in its chemical composition or physical condition, or in the force which we now know to be constantly at work inside it? This force must be either conscient or have in it a grain of consciousness destined to disclose itself in the course of evolution. At first this dormant consciousness was absorbed in the creation of forms and then in the adjustment of mutual relationship between form and form, but ultimately it emerged in order to consciously enlighten this



relationship and in order to create corresponding mental values. Thus, as a potentiality, as a hidden necessity, mind was there from the start. As it emerged from the subconscious, plant and animal life appeared on earth. If we deny this then we have to assume that mind entered into matter from somewhere outside—from a higher mental plane. Such a higher mental plane does exist, but its function is, Sri Aurobindo says, to exert a pressure on the material plane facilitating the awakening of mind here which was already lying dormant in matter. There are various ways of looking at the evolution of life on earth. First there is the modern scientific view that holds everything to be a development from matter. A variation of this is the Samkhya view which affirms an active Nature and an inactive though conscient entity called *Purusha*. A third view is the one favoured by the Upanishads which affirms the *Purusha* to be the material as well as the cause of the world, and Nature to be its conscious force. If we restrict ourselves to the material world and reject all subtle experience as hallucination, we must accept the scientific point of view. But if we take note of the action of our mind when it exceeds its material limitations, if we consider the inner urge, the innate aspiration, which is ever pushing man forward we must accept the Vedantic view.

It is said that Man is the highest possible Name or Numen on this planet. Man is undoubtedly the highest becoming realised so far, but he is not the highest realisable. Looking deep into his consciousness we find that there is in him an innate aspiration, a secret tendency towards God, Light and Immortality. Something in him refuses to accept as final the semi-obscurity and mortality of this earthly life. Just as Matter released the concealed Life-energy, as Life released the Mind, so Mind will in due course release a higher faculty. It must be so. There is no reason why evolution should stop midway at the mental stage.

In the working of the mind we find three elements—thought, will and sensation. On these depend the apprehensive and the comprehensive action of the mind with regard to its object. We know and feel that in this action our mind is hampered by its association with life in matter. As matter brought in life to help it to get over its own inertia, as life brought in mind to remove the obstacles in its path, so mind has to bring in a new principle, freer and more powerful than itself, to overcome its limitations, and make its progress easy along the path of evolution. The rational necessity of a higher faculty is thus clear. Until this higher faculty is awakened mind will always feel hampered in the effectuation of its will, it will not be able to seize the *Rasa* or the underlying delight of its object.

The higher mind must wake up. But must it wake up here in this life? The answer has to be in the affirmative, because mind itself

has, even though in semi-obscurity, that aspiration, that tendency, that necessity. "Just as Matter is instinct with the stuff of Life, as Life is instinct with the stuff of Mind, so is Mind instinct with the stuff of Supermind." No doubt the Supermind is lying concealed today behind our mental formulations, but it is ever ready to emerge when mental conditions permit. The mind must prepare the ground for its advent, but there is in it also an element of inevitability. The preparation is going on in spite of obstacles, the progress is slow, but when the next step is achieved it will be not for a few here and there as in the past, but for the whole race. The concealed Supermind knows the mind and controls it, but the mind is not conscious of it.

Verses 7 and 8.—Brahman-Consciousness, we have seen, is Speech of the speech, Mind of the mind. Here the sage goes on to say that it is also an absolute Sense behind the action of the senses. Sight and hearing are taken merely as typical of the senses. Ordinarily, we know sense to be an action of the organs through which mind contacts a material object. These organs are not in any way fundamental but have, as biology tells us, evolved gradually in the course of physical evolution. In order to attain to Brahman-Consciousness we have to go behind all forms, everything that is not fundamental. We have to go even behind the mind and its functions. We are aware that our sense organs are instruments of the mind and work through the nervous system. Without going into intricate physiology we can say that the human brain receives the sense images by the so-called sensory nerves and sends out its orders to the organs by the motor nerves. Sri Aurobindo says that sense is not even a pure mental function because it depends on the life-currents coursing through the nerves. The embodied mind gives these currents mental values but the functions actually appear to be those of the nerves. How then can we call supramental consciousness, which requires no bodily instrumentation, a Sense of the senses? We have to go deeper and find out what this faculty of sense is in essence before we can answer this question.

We know the process that takes place: an eidolon of matter creates a nerve image which is translated into a mental concept. This eidolon may be a vibration of sound, an image of light, a sense of smell caused by minute particles of matter entering into the nostrils, a sense of taste due to the sap of an object touching the tongue or a sense of touch caused by a physical contact with an object creating a nervous disturbance. The process is three-fold, but so rapid that we usually take it to be one. The physical passes through the vital sheath and then reaches the mind. Essentially then sense is a contact of the mind with an outside object through the physical organs.

According to the Upanishadic thought active consciousness has a four-fold action described by the terms *Vijnāna*, *Prajñāna*, *Sanjñāna*

and *Ājnāna*. The first is a comprehensive supramental function beyond the reach of the human mind as it is. *Prajnāna* is the outgoing apprehensive consciousness whilst the *Sanjnāna* is the in-bringing apprehensive consciousness which draws the object back to itself so as to possess it in conscious substance. By *Ājnāna* the consciousness dwells as an image of the object so as to possess it in power. As far as we are aware we first sense an object and then seize it in knowledge. This work is rapid and spontaneous and is an action of the human mind. Next, we try to comprehend the image in knowledge and possess it in power. This is an intellectual process and is laboured and slow. But this intellectual comprehension and possession is the path by which man's mind is ever struggling to establish a connection with his Supermind. As the process of intellectual comprehension submits itself more and more to the guidance of the Supermind it becomes easier and more spontaneous. The higher consciousness which is hidden behind the mind of man and controls it is the ultimate Knower, the Lord. Its action is the perfect infinite and comprehensive function of the *Vijnāna* and the *Ājnāna*. On that plane the apprehensive action of *Prajnāna* and *Sanjnāna* merge themselves in the all-comprehensive action of the Lord's consciousness.

The consciousness of the creator automatically knows and possesses all things created by itself. But if the universe is to be what it is, namely, one of ignorance and division, it is clear that the externalisation by our divided mind and our apprehending consciousness must come into play. On the higher plane, however, *Prajnāna* and *Sanjnāna* have no *locus standi* and lose themselves entirely in a supramental consciousness. This is the Sense behind the senses that the sage speaks of in these two verses.

Reference has already been made to the sensory and motor nerves of modern Physiology. Ancient Indian psychologists predicated eleven senses—five of knowledge, five of action, and the mind. It is obvious that mind goes with both, for it receives knowledge through the senses of cognition and issues orders through the senses of action. Unless the mind pays attention, the sight of the eye will not make a man see ; and unless the mind directs, the eye will not visualise at all.

Moreover it is now admitted in Psychology that behind the action of the surface mind there is a much vaster sub-conscious cognition which loses nothing that the senses bring but stores it all up in memory. There is an old story which illustrates this very well. A professor of Entomology once saw in a dream a species of red ants with certain marked features unknown to naturalists up to that time. Shortly afterwards, some ants were actually found in South America which resembled in every particular his dream ants. The coincidence struck the professor as remarkable. But, later on, one day while he was going through some of his old books he found inside one of them

a slip of paper on which he had himself noted, twenty years before, the description of some ants reported to be existing in the Andes by some wild Indians of that area. He had forgotten all about this incident but his subconscious memory that had stored it up brought it out in a dream twenty years later. Again, a tale is told of an illiterate servant girl who heard her master daily reciting a Hebrew text. It carried no meaning to her but her subconscious memory stored it up and she was able to reproduce it quite accurately under certain abnormal conditions. Similarly, cases are known where a man operated upon under an anaesthetic could when his sub-conscious mind was released by hypnosis relate all that he had gone through. In fact, a large part of our daily physical action is directed not by our surface mind but by this concealed sub-conscious faculty. Where the surface mind gropes, the subconscious self knows correctly and directs action in an unerring manner. The lower animal does not possess a discriminating mind but it makes no mistakes in performing its life functions. The catering insect, for instance, when killing a beetle for food pricks its sting into a vital spot as skilfully and in as unerring a fashion as the best surgeon.

The Upanishad lays down that the subtle Mind in us knows no limits, that its cognition is infinite. Nor is it dependent on the vital nervous system for its knowledge. There is a vast action of the *Sanjñāna* which is not limited by the functioning of the sense instruments. Associated with this action there is also a vaster action of the *Prajñāna* and *Ājñāna*. It is on the basis of this larger action on the higher plane that the examples of subtle perception quoted above can be explained. The all-comprehensive *Vijñāna* is also acting there, but its action is so concealed as not to be apparent.

That the sense-mind can and does act independently of the physical organs is proved by our psychic experiences and the phenomena of clairvoyance and clairaudition. It is unnecessary to elaborate this point. If I can see at a distance, if I can hear at a distance, if I can read the thought of another, it is clear that my cognition does not depend on my sense-organs. Mind evolving in Matter developed these organs in order to apply its inherent capacities on the physical plane. The higher consciousness can form its own images, can see, hear and know without the aid of the lower human faculties.

Modern thinkers tend more and more to agree that all form is only an operation of force. The ancients held the same view, when they said, **देवात्मशक्तिं स्वगुणैर्निगूढां**, self-power of the Divine Existent hidden by its own modes. What, then, is essential to the operation of Force taking on itself the presentation of form?

Movement or vibration was the beginning of creation. Isha says, the Lord went abroad—**सः पर्यगात्**. The One became the Many. He

became conscious of His manifestation, became sensible of Himself as a movement of force. This is the basis of universal *Sanjnāna*. This is applicable equally in both our internal and external operations. I am angry, means I feel the anger that I have become. I know my body because I have become the body. The creating conscious-force knows the form it has created. The operation of this force is five-fold corresponding to the five cosmic elements and the five human senses. But this is equally true of all forms—material objects as well as forms of mind, forms of character and forms of soul. The essential sense must be able to grasp all these operations on all planes. Let us take an example on our own plane. When I am enjoying the playing of a tune on the violin, the whole process from the scraping of the violin string with a bow right up to the ecstasy I feel inside me is complex and various, but is at the same time one and continuous. If this is so to our mental consciousness, how much more would it be to our highest consciousness! The Sense of senses is capable in itself of seizing the secret essence as a whole, regardless of the various operations. This Sense of senses is not the Absolute Brahman withdrawn into itself, but the Absolute in its outlook on the relative,—the Lord. He that constitutes and controls the action of the cosmic gods.

The supreme Consciousness does not sense by our senses, any more than it thinks by our mind. It acts by a supreme Sense and supreme Mind, creative and comprehensive, of which our organs are a diminished form. These imperfect human faculties have been constituted by the Lord for His cosmic play. In order to attain to the Divine Consciousness man has to get behind them and transcend them.

The ninth verse is—यत् प्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणीयते &c. 'That which breathes not with the breath, that by which life-breath is led forward, know that indeed to be Brahman, not this which men follow after here. This verse reiterates what the second verse says, that Brahman-Consciousness is the life of our life-breath. That is to say, that our human life-energy is an inferior mode of a supreme and universal Energy. This higher power sustains and directs our vital energy in its action, but does not live and act by it.

Prāṇa, as we have seen before, popularly means our life-breath. But in the Upanishad it implies vital force which acts in the body by the five life-currents. Prāṇa is the principal one of these currents, normally essential to the exercise of bodily functions. Still, as we know, it can be suspended by Yoga without destroying life.

Modern Science does not admit that there is any distinct life-energy; for the scientist deals with material energy alone. Prāṇa is not a physical force but a different principle which supports Matter and occupies it. It sustains all forms; no form could exist without

it. It acts in all physical forces like heat, light and electricity. It is their cause ; they are its vehicles. That being so, it is obvious that vital force is outside the scope of physical analysis, which can only observe and analyse phenomena that are its results.

We can become aware of this pure energy by Yoga alone, by rendering our mind and body subtle enough to be able to distinguish the life-currents coursing not only in the physical body but in the subtle frame that lies behind the physical. The system of Yoga which more particularly deals with this is known as Hatha-Yoga and the necessary process of breath-control is called Prāṇāyāma. By regulating the flow of the vital currents, by opening the various nerve-centres (known as *Chakras*) the Yogi can control not only the life operations but also those of the mind in the living body. By pursuing this process he succeeds ultimately in establishing a communication between his physical being and his subtle subliminal self.

Prāṇa, the supreme breath, is therefore described in the first verse as yoked like a horse to the chariot of our body and mind,—yoked and moving forward. In this verse it is further affirmed that Prāṇa is led forward by the divine consciousness. While the mind represents on the terrestrial plane the cognitive aspect of the Lord, Prāṇa represents in the flow of phenomena His dynamic force, everywhere from the tiniest atom to the mightiest star. But just as mind has a Supermind behind it so must life-force have at its back a Supreme Energy, an out-flow of the higher and truer Existence. Here on our earthly plane Prāṇa manifests itself as desire, hunger and enjoyment. On the higher plane desire becomes Love, hunger becomes desireless Satisfaction and enjoyment becomes spontaneous Delight. Such is the Life of our life which by sustaining its inferior mode is leading it ever forward towards its own almighty might.

The first chapter of the Upanishad here comes to a close. It has taught us that the life of the mind and its instruments in which we dwell is only a small part of our existence. It is the outer manifestation, an inferior mode of the Lord concealed within who rules over all our actions. To rise out of this lower consciousness into His consciousness, to attain to the fulness of a life Divine is our destined end.

But our terrestrial existence is not illusory, it is but an incomplete and inferior presentation of the perfect existence on the higher plane of Brahman-Consciousness. Our groping mind is a shadow of the all-knowing Supermind, our speech a feeble echo of the mighty Word that created the worlds, our sense a distorted image of the supreme Sense and our vital energy a broken fragment of the one infinite Life. The Brahman-Consciousness of the Kena and the indwelling Lord of the Isha are one and the same. This supreme Consciousness knows our cosmic existence, upholds it, inspires it and

governs it secretly. The Lord knows the gods, but the gods know Him not. This is the meaning of the parable of the third chapter.

Our mortal life is a dual representation of the concealed divinity. On the one hand there are the negative elements—death, suffering, incapacity and strife. On the other are the positive elements.—immortality concealed behind death, delight behind pain, infinite power behind incapacity and love behind strife. Division is a negative element behind which there ever lies indivisible unity. But what we have to remember is that we must never mistake these positive elements, the gods, for the Brahman though it is true enough that they suggest what the Brahman is. The victory of the gods is Brahman's victory though they know it not. In order to attain to the Highest we have to transcend both the positive and the negative elements, both the gods and the Titans, even though our worship of the gods be a preparation for this ascent. The wise are not detained by the lure of the radiance of the gods, but move forward and go beyond to unity and immortality. It is not intended that the life on earth should be abandoned in pursuit of immortality. Immortality must be achieved here on earth. Sri Aurobindo says, "This life-force in us is led forward by the attraction of the supreme Life on its path of constant acquisition through types of the Brahman until it reaches the point where it has to go . . . across out . . . of the mortal vision of things to some Beyond." Man has to go through existence in this and other worlds where he tastes different types of immortality before he passes into the Beyond where all types are transcended and the one Infinite Immortality attained. These worlds of the Upanishads are not geographical locations in the cosmos but are soul-states. Here on earth man's vision corresponds to the material conditions under which he lives. As he moves up this vision will alter according to the conditions of the plane he reaches. When the soul has entirely realised immortality it will be free from all frame-work, for it will then be one with the Lord. The cycle of rebirth will then be at an end. This victory, the sage insists, must be achieved here. "If afterwards there is assumption of the figure of mortality, it is . . . a descent of the ensouled superconscient existence not for any personal necessity, but for the universal need in the cosmic labour for those yet unfree."

The second part consists of the following five verses:

यदि मन्यसे सुवेदेति दभ्रमेवापि

नूनं त्वं वेत्थ ब्रह्मणो रूपम् ।

यदस्य त्वं यदस्य देवेष्वथ नु

मीमांस्यमेव ते, मन्ये विदितम् ॥ (१)

If thou thinkest that thou knowest It well, little indeed dost thou know of the form of the Brahman. That of it

which is thou, that of it which is in the gods, this thou hast to think out. I think It known. (1)

नाहं मन्ये सुवेदेति नो न वेदेति वेदच ।

यो नस्तद्वेद तद्वेद नो न वेदेति वेद च ॥ (२)

I think not that I know It well and yet I know that it is not unknown to me. He of us who knows it, knows That : he knows that It is not unknown to him. (2)

यस्यामतं तस्य मतं मतं यस्य न वेद सः ।

अविज्ञातं विजानतां विज्ञातमविजानतां ॥ (३)

He by whom It is not thought out, has the thought of It ; he by whom It is thought out, knows It not. It is unknown to the discernment of those who discern of It ; by those who seek not to discern of It, It is discerned. (3)

प्रतिबोधविदितं मतममृतत्वं हि विन्दते ।

आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यं विद्यया विन्दतेऽमृतम् ॥ (४)

When it is known by perception that reflects it, then one has the thought of It, for one finds immortality ; by the Self one finds the force to attain and by the Knowledge one finds immortality. (4)

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति

न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः

भूतेषु भूतेषु विचित्य धीराः

प्रेत्यास्माद्लोकादमृता भवन्ति ॥ (५)

If here one comes to that knowledge, then one truly is ; if here one comes not to the knowledge, then great is the perdition. The wise distinguish That in all kinds of becomings and they pass forward from this world and become immortal. (5)

In this part the sage goes into the apparent paradox of the dual aspect of the Brahman—the unknowable and the knowable, the ineffable Absolute and the outlook of that Absolute on the relative. We have already identified the latter with the Lord of the Isha Upanishad, who ever dwells in His creation, in all movement, small and great. This Lord, this Master-consciousness is what the sage bids



us see and realise behind our earthly life, for, an injunction to know the unknowable, to describe the ineffable would obviously be meaningless.

The Brahman-Consciousness, the Lord, is that for which we have to transcend our lower status, our ordinary human existence. But this consciousness, however great it may be, is not the utter absolute, because it has a relation to the the cosmic movement—created, supported and controlled by it. Is it then a creation of Maya, a being subordinate to Nature? Do not both the universe and its Lord disappear in an ineffable Beyond? How then can we look upon the Lord, a lesser entity as the Truth of truths? Where that Absolute is, cause and effect, mortality and immortality, all cease to exist. Must we then not transcend even the Lord of the universe to attain to the utter Reality? This indeed looks like a paradox. All these questions are implied in the Upanishad. It knows of the ineffable Brahman, the absolute of the Lord, just as it knows the Lord, the absolute of the cosmos and proceeds to speak of the utter Absolute in the only way possible to human speech. It is beyond our powers of cognition and expression, but is by no means a Nihil. Even if we cannot describe it we can certainly indicate it, for we do know a little of it. I know that of It which is my self, that of it which is in the gods. I have to think that little out. I do not know It well, but I know that It is not unknown to me. How can it be quite unknown, since I know a little of it. This relative knowableness of the unknowable is what we have to understand. The little in the cosmic manifestation we can express, but the infinite totality is something that we can hope neither to know nor to express. Yet it is only through the universe that we can arrive at That. We can only arrive at Brahman's form, the cosmic play of its consciousness, and that by going behind our mind and life and senses. How can we, then, know the ineffable beyond?

What we are called upon to do is to know the form of Brahman, the Master-Consciousness of the Lord through and yet beyond the universe in which we live. To use our mind rightly we have first to put aside all form and phenomena. This would give us a glimpse of the Divinity who abides in the form, the face behind the mask. When we have eliminated all forms, we shall find that we have arrived at two fundamental entities, our selves and the gods. The latter, as we have seen already, constitute the positive aspect of the Brahman in the universe. They represent divine power and lead man to all that is bright and good and beautiful in life. Their opponents, the Titans, creatures of darkness, lure man to ignorance and evil. The two powers are fighting incessantly for dominion over the individual and over Nature. The gods win, but it is only because the Lord is behind them.

Brahman is also represented in the universe by the self of the individual man. This self is not a form of his mind and life and senses, but is something that supports and controls these lower forms, something that can say "I am" and not only "I seem". The first verse says,—That of it which is thou, that of it which is in the gods, this is what thy mind has to resolve. What am I of the Brahman? What of It is in the gods? In what way am I related to the gods and in what way are the gods and my self related to the Brahman? The finding of the Upanishad is that I am a real representation of the Supreme Self for all cosmic purposes, and that the gods are real representations of the Supreme Godhead. All individual beings are the supreme Self in essence. All gods are fundamentally the Lord. The Self and the Lord are one Brahman. I have to realise It through my self and through the cosmic movements. The gods supported by my self rule the cosmos of my individual being, the action of my lower human faculties. The Lord rules as Mind of the mind and Life of the life over all cosmos and over all form of being. By going behind these outer forms, I can find my self and the gods. By going behind my self and the gods, I can find the one supreme Self and the God of gods. When I have done that, seen the little ( दध्रम् ) of the Brahman that I am permitted to see, I can say मन्ये विदितम्, I think I know.

This assertion, then, is only relative. I know that I cannot know perfectly with my limited instrument of knowledge. I do not think that I can know the unknowable in the manner in which I have come to know the Self and the Lord. But this I have now accomplished.—I am no longer in ignorance. I know the Absolute in the only way open to me, through his manifestation as the Self and the Lord. The mystery of Brahman is no longer a mystery to me. I can comprehend It through these figures of it as far as it is possible for me to comprehend. The Unknowable is relatively knowable to me. I can enter into it; I can merge myself in it if I want to. I am completely satisfied.

If we think we have grasped the Brahman by our mentality then our knowledge is no knowledge, it can easily turn to falsehood. Those who try to fix Brahman into what they can grasp of the fundamental ideas and seek to discern It by thought, can have no real discernment. They deceive themselves and take some idea symbols for the Reality. But if we use our mind and discernment rightly, if we realise that our mental perceptions are so many clues that indicate the Beyond, if we use the idea symbols only to transcend them, then we are happy indeed "even in being exceeded by Him."

The phrase प्रतिबोधविदितम् implies that our human mind can reflect in a supreme understanding the image of the Lord as He shows Himself to our mentality. This reflection is all-important to

us for by it we enter into the beatitude of the Brahman-Consciousness. By self-realisation of the Brahman we attain to divine energy and by knowledge of the Brahman we arrive at infinite immortality.

This achievement, the fifth verse says, must be done here on earth, in this earthly body. Then only can we arrive at our true existence. Otherwise great is the perdition ; we remain submerged in our mentality and never rise to our true supramental being.

The Self and the Lord are, then, the ineffable Absolute. When we go to seek that which is unknowable to us we always find that we have found the Self and the Lord. The unknowable has placed itself in these two forms as the object of man's highest aspiration.

We know now that our self is a representation of the Supreme Self and that our human faculties, the cosmic gods in us, are representations of the Lord. The Supreme Self and the Supreme Godhead are the Brahman in essence—the Brahman immanent in his creation. That is our goal. The question before us is how to reach this goal, how to attain to its Master-consciousness? Knowledge is the way indicated by the sage. "When it is known by perception that reflects it, then one has the thought of It." The true Existence is reflected, as it were, in a mind that has become clean and pure and receptive. Mind is one of the cosmic gods. In fact, the greatest of the gods, Indra, is behind its working. The sage illustrates his philosophy here in the third part by a beautiful apologue.

ब्रह्म ह देवेभ्यो विजिग्ये ; तस्य ह ब्रह्मणो विजये देवा अमहीयन्त ।

त ऐक्षन्तास्माकमेवायं विजयोऽस्माकमेवायं महिमेति ॥ (१)

तद्वैषां विजिज्ञौ ; तेभ्यो ह प्रादुर्बभूव ; तन्न व्यजानत किमिदं  
यक्षमिति ॥ (२)

तेऽग्निमब्रुवन्—जातवेद एतद्विजानीहि किमेतद् यक्षमिति ; तथेति ॥ (३)

तदभ्यद्रवत्तमभ्यवदत् कोऽसीति ; अग्निर्वा अहमस्मीत्यब्रवीज्जातवेदा  
वा अहमस्मीति ॥ (४)

तस्मिंस्त्वयि किं वीर्यमिति ; अपीदं सर्वं दहेयं यदिदं पृथिव्यामिति ॥ (५)

तस्मै तृणं निदधावेतदहेति ; तदुपप्रेयाय सर्वजवेन, तन्न शशाक दग्धुम् ;  
स तत एव निववृते—नैतदशकं विज्ञातुं यदेतद् यक्षमिति ॥ (६)

अथ वायुमब्रुवन्—वायवेतद्विजानीहि, किमेतद् यक्षमिति ; तथेति ॥ (७)

तदभ्यद्रवत्, तमभ्यवदत्—कोऽसीति ; वायुर्वा अहमस्मीत्यब्रवीत्  
मातरिश्वा वा अहमस्मीति ॥ (८)

तस्मिंस्त्वयि किं वीर्यमिति ; अपीदं सर्वमाददीय यदिदं  
पृथिव्यामिति ॥ (६)

तस्मै लृणं निदधावेतदादस्त्वेति ; तदुपप्रेयाय सर्वजवेन, तन्न  
शशाकादातुम् ; स तत एव निववृते—नैतदशकं विज्ञातुम् यदेतद्  
यक्षमिति ॥ (१०)

अथेन्द्रमब्रुवन्—मघवन्नेतद् विजानीहि, किमेतद् यक्षमिति ; तथेति ।  
तदभ्यद्रवत्, तस्मात् तिरोदधे ॥ (११)

स तस्मिन्नेवाकाशे स्त्रियमाजगाम बहुशोभमानाम् उमां हैमवतीम् ।  
तां होवाच—किमेतद् यक्षमिति ॥ (१२)

The Eternal conquered for the gods and in that victory of the Eternal the gods came to greatness. This was what they said. "Ours is the victory, ours is this greatness." (1)

That marked this thought of theirs ; to them that became manifest. They could not discern of That, which was this mighty Daemon. (2)

They said to Agni. "O Knower of all Births, this discern, what is this mighty Daemon." He said, "So be it." (3)

He rushed upon That ; It said to him, "Who art thou?" "I am Agni", he said "and I am the Knower of all Births." (4)

"Since such thou art, what is the force in thee?" "Even all this I can burn, all this that is upon the earth." (5)

That set before him a blade of grass ; "This burn". He went towards it with all his speed and he could not burn it. Even there he ceased, even thence he returned ; "I could not discern of That, what is this mighty Daemon". (6)

Then they said to Vāyu, "O Vāyu, this discern, what is this mighty Daemon." He said, "So be it." (7)

He rushed upon That ; It said to him, "Who art thou?" "I am Vāyu," he said, "and I am he that expands in the Mother of things." (8)

"Since such thou art, what is the force in thee?" "Even all this I can take for myself, all this that is upon the earth." (9)

That set before him a blade of grass : "This take". He went towards it with all his speed and he could not take it. Even there he ceased, even thence he returned ; "I could not discern of That, what is this mighty Daemon." (10)

Then they said to Indra, "Master of plenitudes, get thou the knowledge, what is this mighty Daemon." He said, "So be it." He rushed upon That. That vanished from before him. (11)

He in the same ether came upon the Woman, even upon Her who shines out in many forms, Uma daughter of the snowy summits. To her he said, "What was this mighty Daemon?" (12)

Before we proceed to expound the parable it is necessary to understand that the gods of the Upanishad differ in an all-important respect from those of the Veda. The latter know the Brahman. They are conscious of their being essentially the Supreme Godhead. Their play in man is a conscious assumption of human limitations. They are ever aware of their true identity. In the Upanishads, however, they have fallen from this high position so much so that they do not know whose power works behind them, whose are the victories that they win. But for this difference the three gods, Indra, Vayu, Agni, retain much of their Vedic aspect. They are the rulers of the mental, the vital and the material planes respectively, but they are unconscious of being representatives of the Supreme Power.

The gods have had a great victory against the Titans. The children of Light have won a great battle against the children of darkness but the victors are not aware that it is Brahman who has conquered for them. Consequently they are rejoicing in their own greatness, light and glory. This victory represents the advance of man to a high state of an enlightened mentality, a strong vitality, a well-ordered body and a happy harmonious way of living. Man has successfully achieved the position of the highest creature on this planet. He is self-satisfied and jubilant. But the gods in him do not know that the Eternal has brought about this victory only in order that he may successfully rise above his present life, intelligent, well-ordered, strong and harmonious though it be. So the Lord appears before the exultant gods but does not reveal himself. The appearance of this unknown Power, great and terrible, frightens the gods. They are afraid that their dominion is seriously threatened. Agni rises at their bidding to ascertain the identity of the unknown. Agni is the flame of conscious force in matter, he is Jāta Vedas, the

knower of all Births. If this Yaksha is a new creation on the material plane who threatens the dominion of the gods, who is fitter to find out his identity than Agni? He rushes towards the unknown but the latter calmly questions him, who are you, what is your power? Proudly Agni replies that he is the fire in matter, the knower of all births and that he can burn everything to ashes. In spite of this proud reply he fails to consume a blade of grass put before him. How could he burn it when it had the power of the Eternal behind it! Crestfallen, he returns to his brethren and tells them that he has failed to discover the identity of the dread visitor. But it was clear that he was no material form.

Another god now rises to answer to the call. It is Vāyu, the Vital Energy,—Mātariṣwan who fills the infinite space. All that is in this creation is his movement. It is he who has placed the fire of conscious force in all things. If the Daemon be some unknown but gigantic Life-force, he would surely know it and get hold of it! The god rushes up to the Yaksha and he is met by the same calm challenge as before—"Who art thou? What is the power in thee?" He replies that he is the god Vāyu Mataricwan and that he in his stride can take hold of all that is and master it. Again the same test as before. A frail blade of grass is placed before him and he is asked to seize it. But he fails as ignominiously as Agni. How could he take up a thing that is under the protection of the Almighty! Vāyu returns and reports to the other gods that he has been unable to find out the identity of the unknown. It was clear, however, that the apparition was no vital form, subject to the dominion of the universal vital energy.

The next to arise was the Mighty Indra, Lord of the Mind. It is he that rules over the vital senses which Vāyu uses for his mastery. If the Daemon could be grasped by the senses, known by the mind, then Indra was sure to find him out and bring him under his sway. But obviously this Yaksha belonged to a higher plane where Indra the lord of Mind had no dominion. For, as soon as the god approached the Yaksha, he vanished. Mind could operate only within the framework of Time and Space, but the unknown was outside and beyond that framework.

Indra, however, did not retire crest-fallen like his two predecessors. He soared up into the higher ether, the mind ascended into the regions of pure mentality. The condition of knowledge by reflective perception was fulfilled. In the high ether the ruler of the mind met the resplendent goddess Uma Haimavati and questioned her. She told him that the Daemon who had appeared was Brahman itself by whose might the gods of mind and life and body had been victorious in their struggle against the powers of darkness. Uma, the daughter of the Snowy Summits, who is the Supreme Nature, the

Supreme Consciousness of the Brahman, from her alone can the cosmic gods learn the essential truth about themselves, for she has the knowledge of the One while the gods know only of the many. Indra, Vāyu and Agni became the greatest of the gods, for Indra was the first to come to a knowledge of the Brahman while the two others had approached and spoken to the Brahman even though without a knowledge of its identity. The parable clearly illustrates what the sage has said before, namely that our mind must reach a condition of supreme purity in order to be able to reflect the supreme Consciousness ; beyond this it cannot hope to go, it must be satisfied with reflecting as in a faithful mirror the image of the Absolute, as far as the Absolute permits that image to be reflected.

सा ब्रह्मेति होवाच, ब्रह्मणो वा एतद्विजये महीयध्वमिति ।

ततो हैव विदाश्चकार ब्रह्मेति ॥ (१)

तस्माद्वा एते देवा अतितरामिवान्यान् देवान्—यदग्निर्वायुरिन्द्रः,  
ते ह्येनन्नेदिष्टं पस्पशुस्ते ह्येनत् प्रथमो विदाश्चकार ब्रह्मेति ॥ (२)

तस्माद्वा इन्द्रोऽतितरामिवान्यान् देवान्, स ह्येनन्नेदिष्टं पस्पशुः,  
स ह्येनत् प्रथमो विदाश्चकार ब्रह्मेति ॥ (३)

तस्यैष आदेशो—यदेतद्विद्युतो व्यद्युतदा इतीन्न्यमीमिषदा-  
इत्यधिदैवतम् ॥ (४)

अथाध्यात्मं—यदेतद् गच्छतीव च मनोऽनेन चैतदुपस्मरत्यभीक्षणं  
सङ्कल्पः ॥ (५)

तद्ध तद्वनं नाम, तद्वनमित्युपासितव्यम् । स य एतदेवं वेदाभिर्हैनं  
सर्वाणि भूतानि संवाञ्छन्ति ॥ (६)

उपनिषदं भो ब्रूहीति ; उक्ता त उपनिषद्, ब्राह्मो वाव त  
उपनिषदमब्रूमेति ॥ (७)

तस्यै तपो दमः कर्मेति प्रतिष्ठा, वेदाः सर्वाङ्गानि, सत्यमायतनम् ॥ (८)

यो वा एतामेवं वेद, अपहत्य पाप्मानमनन्ते  
स्वर्गे लोके ज्येये प्रतितिष्ठति, प्रतितिष्ठति ॥ (९)

She said to him, "It is the Eternal. Of the Eternal is this victory in which ye shall grow to greatness." Then alone he came to know that this was Brahman. (1)

Therefore are these gods as it were beyond all the other gods, even Agni and Vāyu and Indra, because they came nearest to the touch of That . . . . (2)

Therefore is Indra as it were beyond all the other gods because he came nearest to the touch of That, because he first knew that it was the Brahman. (3)

Now this is the indication of That,—as is this flash of the lightning upon us or as is this falling of the eyelid, so in that which is of the gods. (4)

Then in that which is of the Self,—as the motion of this mind seems to attain to That and by it afterwards the will in the thought continually remembers it. (5)

The name of That is "That Delight", as That Delight one should follow after It. He who so knows That, towards him verily all existences yearn. (6)

Thou hast said "Speak to me Upanishad"; spoken to thee is Upanishad. Of the Eternal verily is the Upanishad that we have spoken. (7)

Of this knowledge austerity and self-conquest and works are the foundation, the Vedas are all its limbs, truth is its dwelling place. (8)

He who knows this knowledge, smites evil away from him and in that vaster world and infinite heaven finds his foundation, Yea, he finds his foundation. (9)

The ground is now prepared and the Sādhaka is in a position to understand how, step by step, he can rise from his lower human consciousness to the summit of Brahman-Consciousness. First there are the outer forms which he must transcend in order to get to the essential in the universe. The essential consists of his own self and the gods in Nature. In what relation the gods stand to Brahman has been made clear in the third part. Mind, life and body through which the gods act must become conscious of that which has constituted them, and secretly supports and controls them. Gradually transcending their egoism they must learn consciously to reflect the light of the One Eternal. Then will something of the supreme image of Brahman, though only that much of it which we are permitted to realise, descend on us and transform our nature into Divine nature.

But all this cannot come about suddenly as if by magic. Verse 4 says that the indication of That will come like the flash of the lightning or the falling of the eye-lid. It will come and go, giving us momentary glimpses of the Supreme. Again and again will this



happen till mind, life and senses are fixed in the memory of the Beatific Vision. The touches and visits will steadily support the cosmic gods in their upward aspiration. Ultimately man's self as well as the gods in him will learn to respond habitually to the higher contacts in place of the contacts of this earth. Our faculties then will think of nothing, enjoy nothing, sense nothing but the Supreme. In the words of the Upanishad, "the will in the thought will constantly remember it." But then is it our aim to forget completely the external world?—Take it as a never-ending trance of the mind? The Master says, "this is possible if the soul so wills but it is not inevitable." The Mind of the mind, the Life of the life, the Sense of the sense, the Matter of the matter of the body are one and indivisible. They exist for Brahman only and are conscious of it. Even when they function within an individual they are aware of the concealed Brahman the whole time. Once awakened to Brahman-Consciousness, they can never be bound by the limitations of the ego. They will never again fall under the illusion of a separate existence. The eye will see Brahman in every thing, the ear will hear Brahman in every sound, the touch will sense Brahman in every object. The gods will be governed by a supreme law of indivisible Oneness in the Lord. To the soul thus awakened the world will cease to be external, for it will sense everything within itself.

In a supreme realisation our faculties will be aware not only of the higher Mind, Life and Sense but of That which constitutes them. The Universe will become for these enlightened gods a figure of the self-aware Supermind, the infinite Consciousness-Force and the blissful Super-Conscience of the One without a second. We have seen already that there are two fundamental entities, the gods and the self in us and that the latter is greater than the cosmic powers and supports their action in the individual. The Godward trend of the soul is more important for our perfection than the transfiguration of these deities. Along with their transfiguration, the self must also realise itself and enter into the one Self of all, the *Paramātmān*, the indivisible Spirit whose Consciousness functions in so many centres. This ascent into the Supreme Spirit must be achieved by the self through the mind. In the case of the gods transcendence comes about by the Super-Conscient itself descending into them and opening their eyes. But the mind acts in a different way. It appears to be lifted up to That and, although it falls back again and again, ultimately remembers That to which it has attained in flashes before. It is really an action of the self which thus rises to the Truth of its being through its mentality. By constant visions and contacts the self is at last able to abide securely in its Reality. This transcendence, this entry into the state of eternal Self-delight is the immortality declared by the Upanishads to be the goal of our aspiration.

Now, when the self has achieved this transcendence, does the cosmic manifestation vanish along with its gods? And with this evanescence does the Lord of the universe disappear? Whatever the later Vedānta says it is clear that the Isha and Kena Upanishads answer both questions definitely in the negative. Nothing vanishes but egoism, nothing disappears but the illusion of division. In verse 6 which describes the Brahman as 'That Delight' we have the culmination of the teaching of Kena. As the delight, the Ānanda, Brahman is to be sought and worshipped. 'This Bliss is a very positive thing. Brahman who is positive Ānanda cannot be a silent void, nor can he be described by a bunch of negative adjectives. Once I know and possess Brahman as Ānanda I become a centre of that supreme Ānanda radiating it the world over, and attracting all to it. No, the world does not vanish from me, for towards me "verily will all existences yearn."' "

The sage says in verse 7 to the seeker, "Thou didst seek the Upanishad of the Brahman, the mystery of the Supreme, I have given it to thee." What Upanishadic teaching really is, is defined for us in the eighth verse. The reward that is held out to the seeker is specified in verse 9. In fact, the last two verses sum up, as it were, the whole work. The foundation of Upanishadic realisation is said to be austerities, self-mastery and action. To interpret the word 'action' as the performance of rites and rituals enjoined by the *Shāstras* would be taking a narrow view, and a view inconsistent with the whole trend of the Upanishad. The path to realisation lies through our life and works in the world. We have to ascend to Brahman-Consciousness through our lower mentality. But it is only by non-attachment and renunciation that we can rise above it. Hence the need for austerities and self-control. To transfigure our lower nature, not to shun it, is the precept of the sage. This is, as we have seen before, the sense of the first two verses in the Isha,—Rise above attachment and greed, desire to live your hundred years on earth doing your *karma*. The limbs of the Upanishad are stated to the Veda. This does not imply the due performance of Vedic rituals either. The real meaning of the phrase is that the Supreme is to be sought and found in the light of the inspired utterances of the Vedic seers. Truth is stated to be the abode of the Upanishad. The word does not imply an intellectual verity, but the supreme eternal Reality. The seeker has to dwell in Truth-consciousness in the Vedic sense. It is by doing life's works in a spirit of renunciation and self-discipline, by following the inspired teaching of the Vedas, by living in the eternal Truth that one can rise to the realisation of Supreme Knowledge. Possessed of this knowledge the seeker will easily smite evil away from him. How can sin and evil come to one awakened to the consciousness of indivisible unity! He is for ever installed in that

vaster world and infinite heaven. This is not the heaven of the *Purāṇas*, nor even the lesser *Brahmaloka* of the *Mundaka Upanishad* but rather the abode of Supreme Knowledge and Eternal Bliss which would correspond to the higher Brahman worlds of the *Katha* or the *Swarloka* of the *Veda*, the vast existence that is the eternal Truth. The soul of man thus reaches the perfection that is its goal, the mortal attains to immortality.

To sum up, the *Kena Upanishad* has affirmed three states of existence—first, the human and mortal state—second, the Brahman-consciousness which is the absolute of the relativities of the first state—third, the utter Absolute which is unknowable, unknowable yet relatively knowable.

The mortal state is one of seeming opposites, made up of the positive and the negative, the bright and the dark, the gods and the Titans. But these apparent opposites are figures of the one radiant Lord who has constituted them and controls them but is at the same time beyond them. In the Lord there can be no falsity or misrepresentation. He is Brahman-consciousness, the Truth of the Brahman. To rise from the human and mortal state, which is one of blindness and misrepresentation, to the radiant Reality of the second state is the aim of our existence. The partial figures of the lower existence here are to be transformed into the perfect and absolute figures of the higher. The utter absolute is something we can never know, but the truth of it, the consciousness of it, are to us attainable. And this is what we know as the Lord, the Godhead who secretly controls the cosmic gods. This supreme Godhead we can attain to only by transcending the limits of our mentality—that is to say, by going behind *Indra*, the ruler of our mind, to Him who is the Ruler of that ruler, the King of kings. This transfiguration is what the *Upanishad* calls passing into the states of immortality. It is also the same thing as rising out of the joy and sorrow of an earthly life into transcendent Beatitude—the *Tadvanam* or the Delight of the Brahman which later thought has described also as the ecstasy of supreme Love and Devotion. Realisation of the delight of Brahman does not imply a state of *Nirvāṇa* when the universe and its Lord vanish out of our cognisance. All that disappears is the ego which has no longer any function to perform. The man thus awakened becomes a centre of Divine *Ānanda*, radiates *Ānanda* all round and attracts all to himself. The man who has become free by realising the truth of himself works to redeem the blind and the unfree—a far nobler thing to do than to abstain from all action and extinguish himself in the Brahman.

The Gods have won a victory over the *Asuras*. Man is today the highest numen on earth. He has established his dominion over all and has built up a life here truly great and gorgeous—a life of knowledge, power, opulence and harmony. But he forgets that the

Lord permitted this victory for His Divine ends—only to give man a chance of rising still higher and fulfilling his evolutionary destiny. To be able to do so, he must rise out of his self-satisfied complacency and realise the Divine purpose of his existence. When he has realised this he will by Love, Devotion and Ānanda find himself to be one not only with the Lord of the Universe but with every being and every thing in the universe. Seeing the Lord immanent in every creature he will call out like the sage of the Isha **योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहं ।**

The pedestal on which the Upanishad stands is made up of self-discipline and action. its limbs are the Veda and its abode is Truth. Action in life, enlightened action, selfless and without attachment, was what these earlier Upanishads enjoined. Later teaching added that such action was bound to be an action of Love and Devotion as well as of enlightenment. We have to act in life as the Lord himself acts, in loving unity with all. To deny nothing, shun nothing, but to transfigure everything and lead all existence to realise the Lord of love, knowledge and power immanent in His creation is the supreme end of our sādhanā. It is an end acceptable to all in the world of today. There is no longer any need for tempting people on with the lures of a paradise of joy. Nor is a promise of eternal rest in a state of nullity or Nirvāṇa likely to attract a humanity that revels in action and movement. The realisation of Brahman-Consciousness in everything, a divine life, a life of Divine works is the only philosophy that is likely to be acceptable, the only philosophy that can establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The truth of this great philosophy was foreshadowed by the sages of these earlier Upanishads.

# Basis of Morality

BY ANILBARAN ROY

All civilised people agree that society cannot function unless there is an accepted code of ethics or morality to guide human conduct. So long morality has been associated with religion. But modern thought has been striking at the root of orthodox religion thus taking away the support and sanction of morality. On account of this a chaos has been created in human life and people everywhere in the world to-day are groping to find a way out of it. This reversal of old values may be a prelude to a new and higher creation in human life; that is the inner meaning of many revolutionary movements of our time. On the other hand, attempts are being made to bring back and re-establish the old order. One solution suggested is to intensify the teaching of religion in the schools so that the foundation of morality may be firmly laid down in the hearts of men when they are very young and receptive. The usual criticism against this view is that religion asks us to believe in things about which there is no rational proof or scientific evidence. In the long history of mankind all sorts of evils have been justified in the name of revealed religion. Once people begin to rely on creeds and dogmas which can never be verified, any act of tyranny and injustice, to which humanity is still so much prone, will be justified in the name of religion. Thus the Hindus deliberately inflict sufferings on their widows on the plea that these will ensure for them great happiness in next life or other worlds after death. Even the burning alive of widows was once justified in this way. In Europe in the middle ages great ecclesiastics insisted on the burning of thousands of heretics so that they might be saved from eternal hell fire. So there is a strong ground for not allowing credal religions to be taught in schools; they should, it is argued, now die a natural death and humanity should be free to progress in the light of science and reason. But on what ground then will the moral rules stand? It is only the fear of a God and hell that makes the mass of men observe these rules. Voltaire once remarked that even if God did not exist it would be necessary to invent Him, lest the Lower Orders, deprived of the fear of hell, should cut our throats. It is again suggested that if the wholesomeness of the moral rules, their conduciveness to the general well-being of society, are explained to people, they will follow them through enlightened self-interest and not with a superstitious faith which is always liable to abuse. Discussing the objection to this rationalistic solution, Mr. Kingsley

Martin writes in his well-known journal, *The New Statesman and Nation*:

"The Rector and the Archbishop fear that these sociological and rational arguments for good citizenship are too complex and too open to argument to be effective. Without authority and without (perhaps they would say) the 'dynamic' of Christian theology they despair of maintaining the Western tradition which our society will allow to snap at its peril. Their fears are justified but their remedy is useless: there is no way in which you can persuade those who are familiar with Marx and Darwin and Frazer and Freud to accept the theology of Orthodox Christianity. That is one of the reasons why in countries like Spain, where the ideas of mediæval Christianity survive, Marx and Darwin and Frazer and Freud are banned as ruthlessly as liberal literature in Nazi Germany. That is why the rector and his friends are in more danger than I of becoming supporters of a totalitarian hell."

But if the remedy suggested by the rector and his friends—the intensifying of religious education in schools—be worse than useless, that suggested by Mr. Martin himself does not seem to be very hopeful. He suggests a synthesis of modern knowledge which will enable school teachers to explain to children the assumptions on which any civilised life must be based, the code of ethics which we must observe, and the sort of society at which we are aiming. And such teaching could be based to-day, not on the authority of an established church or of supernatural events, but on the only kind of authority acceptable to a free and inquiring man—on truth discovered by reason and experience, capable of modification and development. As examples of gallant efforts of a twentieth century synthesis of modern knowledge, Mr. Martin mentions Wells's series of *Outlines* and Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*. But he overlooked another modern writer of great ability in his country, Aldous Huxley, who holds the thesis that there is no course of human conduct that cannot be justified by reason, that a system of philosophy can be erected as a basis of any form of social or political organisation, and that is why there are so many conflicting "isms" in the world to-day, each claiming for itself the best synthesis of modern knowledge, each referring in its own way to Reason and Science. One glaring example of such a rationalistic synthesis is Hitler's *Mein Kampf* which took the place of the Bible in Nazi Germany. The modern ideals of liberty, democracy, equality, international justice and the rest have been the creations of such countries as America, France, England; in practice they may have as yet fallen far short of these ideals, but they have stood for them, they

have popularised these ideals which have now taken hold of the *human mind and thus they have paved the way to a better social and international order*. But now rises Nazism which negates all these ideals and supports this negation on science and reason. Hitler declared that he stood for the true progress of humanity and that the democratic ideals of England and her Allies would lead to the ruin of civilisation and culture, and even of the human race itself. He deduced the following truths from Darwin, Psycho-analysis and Modern Science: War and struggle is the law of human life as of Nature: equality of all men is a noxious doctrine invented by the Jews, the eternal enemies of the human race; to give higher education to the coloured peoples is a crime against the Creator; a superior race should rule all over the world, the inferior races are to be used as slaves; so women also are to be used as slaves of men. Let me quote here a few extracts from the *Mein Kampf* as samples of his rationalistic synthesis:

"We all feel that in the distant future man may be faced with problems which can be solved only by a superior race of human beings, a race destined to become master of all the other peoples and which will have at its disposal the means and resources of the whole world."

"For the establishment of superior types of civilisation, the members of inferior races formed one of the most essential prerequisites. Only after subjugated races were employed as slaves was a similar fate allotted to animals. Nobody else but puling pacifists can consider this fact as a sign of human degradation."

"Here I must protest as sharply as possible against those nationalist scribes who pretend that such territorial extension would be a 'violation of the sacred rights of man', and accordingly pour out their literary effusions against it . . . At most, the possession of such territory is a proof of the strength of the conqueror and the weakness of those who submit to him. And in this strength alone lies the right of possession."

It will no doubt be said that the hollowness of the reasoning employed in the *Mein Kampf* can be easily exposed. But the German people have not a less scientific mind and reasoning capacity than any other people in the world. How is it that they swallowed the devil's philosophy that is the *Mein Kampf*? Is this not a final and convincing proof that science and reason are not enough? In order that our reasoning may be correct and yield valid conclusions, our mind and

heart must be freed from all passions and prejudices and this condition is hardly fulfilled outside the sphere of pure science or metaphysics. The German people accepted the *Mein Kampf* as Gospel truth as it appealed to their deep-seated hatred of the Jews, their burning thirst for revenge against the Allies and their historic ambition of conquering the world. So Mr. Martin's plea that a synthesis of modern knowledge on the basis of science and reason will give us the most effective moral rules and social and international standards is untenable. We must find some method of changing human nature so that it may be freed from blinding passions and prejudices, and this will not be done simply by an intellectual and sentimental preaching of non-violence, love and other humanitarian ideals. That sort of teaching humanity has had for thousands of years. It is not that it has had no effect; it is due to the influence of these ideals that humanity has progressed in civilisation and culture; but it cannot proceed further without a radical change in human nature, it may even relapse into barbarity, as it must have happened to many civilisations in the past. The root of Nazism is in human nature, though in the present age it found most favourable conditions in Germany for a violent manifestation. So it would be foolish to think that with the defeat of Germany, the threat to civilisation will disappear and a new order of peace and harmony will be established on the earth. But the victory of the Allies has kept the doors open for the creation of conditions in which humanity can proceed to a radical and spiritual change which alone can bring about a higher order of life.

Mr. Martin has placed Marx and Freud in the same list; they have this much in common that their views have tended to undermine people's faith in organised religions such as the Christian Church. But while Marx holds that history is shaped by economic forces, Freud holds that the life of man is really determined by the hidden forces that work in his subconscious nature. Economic conditions have no doubt great influence, but they are secondary; primary determinants are psychological factors. If communism succeeds in giving all people a decent economic life, that would not cure men of their sadistic and masochistic impulses which are the root cause of all tyranny and oppression in the world; rather goaded by the monotony of a peaceful and prosperous life, men may invent new means and methods of torturing themselves and others; and even now we know that people who are above wants do not necessarily become men of virtuous and peaceful habits. So the crux of the problem is to find some methods by which the root of evil in human nature can be completely eradicated. If, as some think, this cannot be done, then there is really no hope for humanity, and we should accept the maxim once given by Aldous Huxley, "Do what you will": whatever you do or not do, you cannot escape evil and suffering, whether individually or



as a race. As the psycho-analysts hold, there is a limit to human civilisation beyond which it cannot rise.

But a deeper view of human nature and human possibilities does not give countenance to such pessimism and despair. Mind, life and body are not our whole being, and the subconscious, though a powerful factor, is not the sole determinant of our life. Behind our surface consciousness, there is the Soul, the Spirit of which mind, life and body are the outer instruments, and that Soul is a portion of the Divine in us. All the noblest and highest qualities of men are but reflections and emanations from this Soul, and all their evils are due to the obstructions and distortions caused by the imperfect development of the outer nature. This Soul is at present concealed in us : if by inward search we can find it, if we can thus live deeper within and put out steadily the inner forces into the outer instrumentality, "there could begin a heightening of our force of conscious being so as to create a new principle of consciousness, a new range of activities, new values for all things, a widening of our consciousness and life, a taking up and transformation of the lower grades of our existence,—in brief the whole evolutionary process by which the Spirit in Nature creates a higher type of being. Each step could mean a pace, however distant from the goal, or a close approach leading to a larger and more divine being, a larger and more divine force and consciousness, . . . there could be an initial unfolding towards the divine life. All religion, all occult knowledge, all super-normal (as opposed to abnormal) psychological experience, all Yoga, all psychic experience and discipline are sign-posts and directions pointing us upon that road of progress of the occult self-unfolding spirit."<sup>1</sup>

If we accept this spiritual view of evolution, moral and social rules and standards find their sanction in the deepest truth of our being and our destiny on the earth : for they are the preliminary discipline needed so that we may turn from the present life in the ignorance towards the spiritual divine life in which alone man can find his perfection and the fulfilment of all his hopes and aspirations on the earth. This is not reliance on irrational creeds or dogmas, but on psychological experience which is open to all human beings. Creeds and dogmas are really meant to prepare the mind and heart of men for the spiritual turn and they are valid only so far as they lead towards that. There is nothing in Darwin, Marx, Fraser or Freud which can be validly levelled against this view of life. Darwin's theory of the origin of species contradicted the Christian dogma about special creation, but that or any other creed or dogma does not really constitute the essence of religion or spirituality. The essence of all religions in the world is that there is an infinite conscious being who

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 654.

is the creator and ruler of the world and that the present condition of man, with all his cravings, sufferings and imperfection, is only an intermediate stage or step towards a higher life of beatitude and perfection. And if we appeal to our higher reason, we shall find that no other account of the world can give a more satisfactory and rational explanation of all the facts of existence. If the creeds and dogmas of the old religions seem irrational to us, they did not appear so to the people for whom they were meant specially. All religion has a philosophy behind it, and that philosophy explains the truths of religion in the terms of the knowledge attained by humanity at that stage of its evolution. The Ptolemaic system of Astronomy supported the geo-centric Christian view of the universe; if the rejection of that Astronomy does not invalidate all science, why should the mediæval Christian theology be an argument against all religion and spirituality? Marx denied the truth of the Spirit, but, as his co-worker and friend Engels frankly admitted, the idealistic or spiritual view of the world can never be refuted in theory, that is, by reason; it was the practical defects of the spiritual view that constituted their most potent argument against it. But materialism also has not been found to be very satisfactory practically. Modern Psycho-analysis has shown that it is more profitable to search the inner regions of man than to confine our attention to the outer organisation of life. But Psycho-analysis is still an infant science, and has not been able to probe sufficiently deep into earthly human nature. That, however, was done by Yoga in India thousands of years ago, and no synthesis of modern knowledge can be complete and really effective which does not take into account the immense strides it has made in modern times. It is indeed a hopeful sign of the times that arch-highbrows like Aldous Huxley are beginning to turn towards Indian Yoga and spirituality.

Yoga is nothing but practical psychology, it aims at finding the deepest truth of our being, the Soul, the Spirit, and organising our outer life and action on that spiritual basis. Both Morality and Religion are but preliminary disciplines for making ourselves fit for Yoga. By themselves they are not sufficient for bringing about any fundamental change of consciousness and nature. Hitler lived an ascetic life and the name of the Creator was often heard from his lips; but that did not prevent him from being the greatest criminal in history. He is said to have been guided by an inner voice in all his actions; but the diabolical nature of his actions and the fate to which he led Germany leaves no doubt that the voice he was hearing was not of the Divine but of the Devil himself. Ascetic discipline and religious practices are of spiritual value only when, under proper guidance, they prepare our heart and mind for the practice of Yoga, that is, a direct and conscious union with Self, with God. Thus in

the famous Rāja-Yoga system of Patanjali. Morality and Religion are counted as the first two steps. Yama and Niyama, in an eight-fold path leading towards the spiritual goal—*Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyama, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi*. The last three steps constituting the core of the Yoga are concerned with inner concentration and meditation by which we can find the Spirit within us and learn to live in it. Morality is often confused with spirituality, and the Western people with their practical intelligence are more attracted to moral rules which furnish definite rules of action or forbearance than to spiritual practice. They favour Buddhism which they regard as a high code of morality similar to the Christian code without the encumbrances of Christian dogmas. In our country also, Mahatma Gandhi has taken up a similar attitude and he has concentrated on the first two steps of Patanjali's Rāja-Yoga and specially on the four kinds of Yama—Non-violence, truthfulness, celibacy and non-possession. But morality consists in following certain external rules, while spirituality is rising to a higher consciousness from which the right conduct will follow spontaneously and infallibly. Buddhism also is not a mere code of Morality; it also aims at rising to a consciousness higher than the mental; that consciousness is called Nirvāṇa as in order to rise to it we have to extinguish our egoism in all its subtle forms; the inner practice of Buddhism consists in meditating on the peace and silence of Nirvāṇa consciousness which is not much different metaphysically from the pure Puruṣa consciousness of Sāṃkhya and Pātañjala or the Brahman consciousness of the Vedānta.

It is only by Yoga or spiritual practice that the lower instincts and passions of man can be conquered and his mind, life and body attain their own perfection. It is not a mere religious dogma or theory; it is a scientific process, and any one who practises it with sincerity is sure to have the result in increased capacity for knowledge, power and delight of existence.

It will be argued that Yoga is a highly specialised and difficult process and cannot be prescribed for all humanity who must be disciplined by social, moral and religious rules and principles. That is no doubt true. But we have been searching for a sanction for these rules and we find that in Yoga; for Yoga they serve as a preliminary discipline. "In the right view of life and of Yoga, all life is either consciously or subconsciously a Yoga. For we mean by this term a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos. But all life, when we look behind its appearance, is a vast Yoga of Nature attempting to realise her perfection in an ever-increasing expression of her potentialities

and to unite herself with her own divine reality. In man, her thinker, she for the first time upon this Earth devises self-conscious means and willed arrangements of activity by which this great purpose may be more swiftly and puissantly attained".<sup>2</sup> It is by the natural course of Evolution that humanity will rise to a higher type of being, the Superman, as animal rose to man in the past. In man Nature has reached a stage where he can consciously co-operate with her in her further evolution, and it is this conscious co-operation which is specially meant by Yoga. As long as the spiritual consciousness is not developed, man will have to depend largely on reason, the highest faculty as yet developed in him ; and he should make the best use of it to guard himself against all ignorant abuses and superstitions. Man requires a religion to satisfy the craving for worship inherent in his nature ; he also requires moral rules in order to control and discipline his lower nature ; and these purposes were served by the old organised religions. But the abuses to which they led induced the rationalists of the eighteenth century to find a substitute and that was found in what is known as the Religion of Humanity.

"The fundamental idea (of the intellectual religion of humanity of the eighteenth century) is that mankind is the god-head to be worshipped and served by man and that the respect, the service, the progress of the human being and human life are the chief duty and chief aim of the human spirit. No other idol, neither the nation, the State, the family nor anything else ought to take its place ; they are only worthy of respect so far as they are images of the human spirit and enshrine its presence and aid its self-manifestation . . . War, capital punishment, the taking of human life, cruelty of all kinds whether committed by the individual, the State or society, not only physical cruelty, but moral cruelty, the degradation of any human being or any class of human beings under whatever specious plea or in whatever interest, the oppression and exploitation of man by man, of class by class, of nation by nation and all those habits of life and institutions of society of a similar kind which religion and ethics formerly tolerated or even favoured in practice, whatever they might do in their ideal rule or creed, are crimes against the religion of humanity, abominable to its ethical mind, forbidden by its primary tenets, to be fought against always, in no degree to be tolerated. Man must be sacred to man regardless of all distinctions of race, creed, colour, nationality, status, political or social advancement. The body of man is to be respected, made immune from violence and outrage, fortified by science against disease and preventible death. The life of man is to be held sacred, preserved, strengthened, ennobled, uplifted. The heart of man is to be held sacred also, given scope, protected from violation, from

<sup>2</sup> *The Synthesis of Yoga*, by Sri Aurobindo.

suppression, from mechanisation, freed from belittling influences. The mind of man is to be released from all bonds, allowed freedom and range and opportunity, given all its means of self-training and self-development and organised in the play of its powers for the service of humanity. And all this too is not to be held as an abstract or pious sentiment, but given full and practical recognition in the persons of men and nations and mankind. This, speaking largely, is the idea and spirit of the intellectual religion of humanity. One has only to compare human life and thought and feeling a century ago with human life, thought and feeling in the pre-war period to see how great an influence this religion of humanity has exercised and how fruitful a work it has done.\* . . .

"But still, in order to accomplish all its future, the idea and religion of humanity has to make itself more explicit, insistent and categorically imperative. For otherwise it can only work with clarity in the minds of the few and with the mass it will be only a modifying influence, but will not be the rule of human life. And so long as that is so, it cannot entirely prevail over its own principal enemy. That enemy, the enemy of all religion, is human egoism, the egoism of the individual, the egoism of class and nation . . . For that essentially must be the aim of the religion of humanity, as it must be the earthly aim of all human religion, love, mutual recognition of human brotherhood, a living sense of human oneness and practice of human oneness in thought, feeling and life, the ideal which was expressed first some thousands of years ago in the ancient Vedic hymn and must always remain the highest injunction of the Spirit within us to human life upon earth . . .

"But this is the question whether a purely intellectual and sentimental religion of humanity will be sufficient to bring about so great a change in our psychology. The weakness of the intellectual idea even when it supports itself by an appeal to the sentiments and emotions, is that it does not get at the centre of man's being. The intellect and the feelings are only instruments of the being, and they may be the instruments of either its lower external form or of the inner and higher man, servants of the ego or channels of the soul. The aim of the religion of humanity was formulated in the eighteenth century by a sort of primal intuition : that aim was and it is still to recreate human society in the image of three great kindred ideas, liberty, equality and fraternity. None of these has really been won in spite of all the progress that has been achieved. This is because the idea of humanity has been obliged in an intellectual age to mask its true character of a religion and a thing of the soul and the spirit and to appeal to the vital and physical mind of man rather than his

\* Nazism came as a reaction to this and was a determined attempt to rob humanity of all the advances made in this way.

inner being . . . It has laboured to establish a political, social and legal liberty, equality and mutual help in an equal association. But though these aims are of great importance in their own field, they are not the central thing ; they can only be secure when founded upon a change of the inner human nature and inner way of living ; they are themselves of importance only as means for giving a greater scope and a better field for man's development towards that change and, when it is once achieved, as outward expression of the larger inward life. Freedom, equality, brotherhood are three godheads of the soul ; they cannot be really achieved through the external machinery of society or by man so long as he lives only in the individual and the communal ego. When the ego claims liberty, it arrives at competitive individualism ; when it asserts equality, it arrives first at strife, then at an attempt to ignore variations of Nature, and, as the sole way of doing that successfully, it constructs an artificial and machine-made society. A society that pursues liberty as its ideal is unable to achieve equality ; a society that aims at equality will be obliged to sacrifice liberty. For the ego to speak of fraternity, is for it to speak of something contrary to its nature. All that it knows is association for the pursuit of common egoistic ends, and the utmost that it can arrive at is a closer organisation for the equal distribution of labour, production, consumption and enjoyment.

"Yet is brotherhood the real key to the triple gospel of the idea of humanity. The union of liberty and equality can only be achieved by the power of human brotherhood and it cannot be founded on anything else. But brotherhood exists only in the soul and by the soul : it can exist by nothing else. For this brotherhood is not a matter either of physical kinship or of vital association or of intellectual agreement. When the soul claims freedom, it is the freedom of its self-development, the self-development of the divine in man in all his being. When it claims equality, what it is claiming is that freedom equally for all and the recognition of the same soul, the same godhead in all human beings. When it strives for brotherhood it is founding that equal freedom of self-development on a common aim, a common life, a unity of mind and feeling founded upon the recognition of the inner spiritual unity. These three things are in fact the nature of the soul : for freedom, equality, unity are the eternal attributes of the Spirit. It is the practical recognition of this truth, it is the awakening of the soul in man and the attempt to get him to live from his soul and not from his ego which is the inner meaning of religion and it is that to which the religion of humanity also must arrive before it can fulfil itself in the life of the race."<sup>3</sup>

True spirituality is thus in full harmony with the religion of humanity and raises it to a higher level. Mankind is the god-head

<sup>3</sup> *The Ideal of Human Unity*, by Sri Aurobindo.

to be worshipped, but man is made in the image of God, man is God Himself in an individual form and body. God is the one essential self of all human beings, and in worshipping man we really worship the god-head within him—that is the spiritual religion of humanity which alone can serve as the foundation of a really new world order.

The struggle for existence that we find in the animal world is not to be taken as a final law in the human plane where, with the emergence of intelligence, Nature has supplied a means for replacing struggle and conflict by co-operation, and that should be the ruling principle of higher human life. "A state of things must be brought about in which mutual toleration is the law, an order in which many elements, racial, national, cultural, spiritual, can exist side by side and form a multiple unity." The conflict that will help the upward evolution is not fight between class and class, race and race, individual and individual, but the fight between the higher nature of man and the lower nature, and in this fight we have to use weapons supplied not by physical science but by spiritual science, by Yoga. Like all other branches of human knowledge and art, Yoga also has passed through a long process of development and evolution and it is only now that it is reaching its consummation. There have been many paths and systems of Yoga, and also attempts at some sort of a synthesis according to the needs of the particular stage in the evolution of the race, and now has come the necessity of the grandest synthesis of all which will lead man to the fulfilment of his ultimate destiny on the earth. The essence of all Yoga is to turn inward, find the Spirit and spiritual consciousness within and make that the foundation of the outer life and action. "Mind and life themselves cannot grow into their fulness except by the opening up of the larger and greater consciousness to which mind only approaches. Such a larger and greater consciousness is the spiritual, for the spiritual consciousness is not only higher than the rest but more embracing. Universal as well as transcendent, it can take up mind and life into its light and give them the true and utmost realisation of all for which they are seeking: for it has a greater instrumentality of knowledge, a fountain of deeper power and will, an unlimited reach and intensity of love and joy and beauty. These are the things for which our mind, life and body are seeking, knowledge, power and joy, and to reject that by which all these arrive at their utmost plenitude is to shut them out from their own highest consummation."<sup>4</sup>

# The Place of Evil

## In

### Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy

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The problem of evil is one of the most baffling and persistent problems of our life. It stares us in the face, however much we may philosophise and try to argue it out of existence. We may fly on the wings of idealistic fancy into a world of all joy and all radiance, but the moment we come down to our *terra firma*, the existence of evil assumes the appearance of a final inexplicability. Reflection upon the nature of evil has indeed been the starting-point of most daring adventures of the Spirit. It is a riddle which Life, like Sphinx, constantly asks of us; and the deepest movements of life have always sprung from an attempt at its solution.

Hume's statement of the problem of evil is classical. The inescapable presence of evil in life seems to make the attributes of Being all-powerful, all-wise and all-good incompatible one with another. An essentially all-good Being can by no means tolerate His creation being disfigured by untold sufferings and miseries, and by tragic frustrations and anomalies. If, then, God be an all-good Being, either He is not all-powerful, or He is not all-wise; either His noble intentions are thwarted by some malicious forces of Darkness, or He is outwitted by superior diabolical powers. If omniscience be affirmed to be of the essence of God, then either His holiness is to be questioned, or His omnipotence turns into an impotence as against the brute-power of the Devil. If, however, emphasis be laid on the attribute of omnipotence which is believed to be the essence of God, then one must be prepared to see either wisdom or goodness or both departing from the Divine nature. It is inconceivable that the omnipotence of an all-wise and all-good God should not be employed to crush all hostile opposition with a view to making His creation a thing of perfect beauty and seamless harmony. Indeed, on the last alternative, God ceases to be God, and is lost into the darkness of physical Energy or some blind inconscient stuff. This amounts to a solution of evil by renouncing our deep-rooted faith in the Godhead. Or, is it a solution at all? Instead of being a patient untieing, it appears to be



an impatient one-stroke cutting asunder of the knot of evil. With blind Matter as the source of all existence, and with mechanical law as the supreme determinant, the deepest aspirations of our life are stultified, and the profoundest revelations of the spirit are set at naught. There is bound to be an extreme reaction against this all-engulfing levelheadedness. While at one extreme, there is the denial of God as the supreme unity of all values, at another extreme, there is the outright denial of the very existence of evil. Men having a glimpse of a onesided realisation of the Spirit have often found it convenient to maintain the full glory of the Spirit by conjuring evil out of existence. They have looked upon evil as a mere illusion, and have consequently been led on to rob life itself of all reality and significance. Like all-engulfing Materialism, all-absorbing Illusionism or Acosmism is another extreme mode of cutting, instead of untieing, the Gordian knot. Both Materialism and Illusionism render life void of significance, the former ridiculing aspiration and longing for the Infinite as vapourings of the feverish brain, and the latter reducing life to a shadow-show.

There are some philosophers who prefer to sacrifice the infinitude or absoluteness of the Divine Reality in order to make room for evil. They posit an alien principle or some hostile power on which the responsibility for evil can be foisted. Plato postulates Non-Being, and holds that the world of our experience is compounded of Being and Non-Being. Non-Being is that basic, formless stuff out of which the universe has been fashioned. The tragic features of our life are to be traced to the fact that the patterns of perfection can receive only an imperfect, and often clumsy, embodiment in the medium of Non-Being or formless matter. To put it in popular terms, the good intentions of God are in a large measure thwarted by the recalcitrant stuff which matter or non-being provides. Hence the evil that disfigures the creation of God. Plato's solution is a philosophical version of dualistic theology such as we find in a pronounced form in Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism takes its stand on the unmitigated dualism of two ultimate principles which are radically opposed to each other. One is a good God, Ahura Mazda, and the other is an evil God, Ahriman. The world is a battle-ground of the two hostile powers. All that is good and beautiful, lofty and noble, sublime and harmonious in our life is to be credited to Ahura Mazda. And whatever is ugly and abominable, tragic and repulsive, sinful and discordant in our life is an indication of the active presence of Ahriman.

Dualism in some form or other,—dualism that drives a wedge between the imperfect world of actuality and the perfect world of values, appears in widely divergent schools of philosophic thinking. It seems to many minds to be the one satisfactory answer to the riddle of evil. The Sāṃkhya school of Indian philosophy postulates the

absolute dualism of matter and spirit, Prakriti and Puruṣa, the dynamic source of all variations and the static poise of perfection. The evils and imperfections of our life flow from lack of discrimination on the part of the Spirit as to these entirely divergent principles. They are a necessary consequence of the Spirit's self-identification with Nature through non-discrimination. Our body, our life, our mind and intellect are but modifications of Nature, so that it is a colossal mistake to regard them as integral factors in the life of the Spirit. All our sufferings and miseries are the penalties we have to pay for that initial mistake,—for our original sin of eating from the tree of objective or empirical consciousness.

In recent times we know that William James, the pragmatist, regards the inescapable fact of evil as the rock on which all forms of monism are wrecked. Perpetual conflict in our life between Light and Darkness opens up before him a pluralistic universe, in which side by side with the forces of evil there is also "an ideal tendency in the nature of things." God, then, is not, in his view, one all-comprehensive reality, or an omnipotent Sovereign who rules all that he surveys, but just a superior power who is immensely greater than man and who is constantly tending towards the realisation of the higher values. His triumph over the forces of darkness is not a *fait accompli*, or a predestined certainty, but is conditional upon the right type of co-operation from man. The world is not a deterministic scheme, a scene for "the rattling off of a chain forged innumerable years ago." It is a melioristic universe that we live in, a universe in which we have just a fighting chance of safety.

The above tendency to equate God with Goodness but at the same time to reduce Him to "an 'each among eaches'" or "a *primus inter pares*"—a Force which has always to contend with powerful opponents,—has found favour with many distinguished thinkers. But a limited God, a God whose goodness is maintained at the cost of infinitude and absoluteness, can satisfy neither speculative thought nor spiritual experience. The reality of one all-comprehensive Spirit sustaining the bewildering variety of phenomenal existence is an immediate certainty of the profoundest spiritual experience. No amount of difficulties in the way of our reflective understanding, and no amount of protestation by the senses, can override that immediate certainty. So the hypothesis of a pluralistic or dualistic universe torn by perpetual conflict between irreducibly ultimate powers or principles is unacceptable to one who prizes Truth above intellectual conceit. People are often indeed led on by their deep-rooted sense of unity to the admission of an all-originating and all-sustaining ultimate principle, but, as the fact of evil stares them in the face, they feel constrained to strip away from that ultimate principle all rational and ethical attributes. The Absolute they persuade themselves to admit is an

irresistible Power, a Power divested of consciousness and love and perfection. The disconcerting features of our life are traced by the German philosopher Schelling to a dark background in the nature of the Absolute itself. This obviously amounts to a hiding of the difficulties of dualism in the unfathomable abyss of a philosophical all-solvent, and not to an effective overcoming of them. A dark background in the life of the Absolute betrays an unreconciled self-discrepancy therein. Whole-hoggers in this direction do not indeed hesitate to accept as the Ultimate some blind stuff or inconscient energy. Materialism, which puts material substance or unconscious physical energy at the root of all things, finds it easy to dismiss the problem of evil as a self-creation of the God-fearing--a nightmare of the idealist dreamer. Some of those who find matter too gross to function as the ultimate principle, posit an unconscious or semi-conscious creative urge, and try to solve the problem of evil by making consciousness a late arrival on the scene of reality, an "emergence", or a "creative synthesis". Schopenhauer, for example, looks upon the world as the self-objectification of some Unconscious Will. It is only when the Cosmic Will comes to acquire self-consciousness in man that it becomes alive to the essential painfulness, meaninglessness and undesirability of this whole business of living. Naturally therefore, the way to the attainment of peace, calm and equipoise, lies through the stifling of the blind will-to-live or of the urge-to-create. As Lord Buddha teaches, pain is the stuff of which our life is made, because life springs from desire, and desire springs from ignorance. Not all prophets of dynamism are, however, committed to such pessimism. There are some who countenance, not a smothering of the creative urge or the life-force, but rather an active self-identification therewith. Evil and good, pain and pleasure, poison and nectar have both sprung, in their opinion, from the same creative urge. But the creative urge which is immensely rich in potentialities and which is always undergoing enrichment of being by virtue of creating ever fresh novelties and higher realities can eventually surmount all obstacles, sweep away all painful and distressing circumstances and carry forward the co-operating soul to a state of ineffable joy beyond good and evil. It is in noting this important fact,—the fact which emerges from a study of integral mysticism,—that Bergson's "empirical optimism" consists. (*Morality and Religion*, p. 224). Since the vital impetus is a semi-psychological principle, more a free creator of consciousness than itself a fully conscious all-determining agency, the terrible reality of suffering reveals no self-contradiction in the heart of existence. The *élan vital* goes on creating ceaselessly and freely, absolutely undetermined either by any external force or any internal plan or idea ; good and evil, pain and pleasure undeniably result from that same creation. But still humanity finds life on the whole good, and so clings to it. Evil is

certainly real ; there is no metaphysical difficulty in the way of one's accepting it ; nor is there any insuperable practical obstacle in the way of our surmounting it.

There is indeed much truth in Bergson's empirical optimism, but it seems that he was not quite aware of the deeper implications of his findings. Bergson admits it as a matter of experience that the creative principle is on the whole productive of values, and that the disvalues we experience function as incidental circumstances or as helping impediments. Evil is for him really a lesser good, and there is an absolute good beyond the sphere of all conflict. If it be so, how can the creative principle be anything anterior and inferior to the highest values we know, instead of being rather their supreme synthesis? How can it be anything lower than consciousness, instead of being a superconscient Energy? The Ultimate must be conceived at least in terms of the highest we experience, indeed as higher than the highest, and consequently, as much more than we can grasp, and never as less than what we know. If the highest things known to us can all be summed up in the word 'Spirit', that must be the master-word in our possession for the characterisation of ultimate reality. A compromise or surrender on this point in consideration of the overwhelming presence of disvalues in our life, is, to say the least, an unstable position, a half-hearted solution of life's perplexities.

Those who have had a glimpse into the heart of reality and have beheld the Spirit in its ineffable splendour are often inclined to overlook the factual existence of evil. Their eyes being too full of the light of the Spirit, they fail to make a realistic approach to the dark and gloomy features of our life. Pantheism is the product of such onesided realisation. It seeks to explain evil away rather than to attempt a sincere and systematic explanation thereof. The phenomenon of evil is, in the view of Pantheism, a mere appearance, a passing illusion ; it is entirely relative to our sensuous imagination, to our narrow and ignorant way of thinking. Evil is bound to melt away upon the emergence of a total and comprehensive view of reality, a view of reality *sub specie aeternitatis*. It takes all sorts to make a thing of beauty. To produce a picture of unimpeccable beauty what is needed is a judicious combination of different shades of colour, dark as well as bright,—a skilful mixture of shade and light. The dark shades of the picture will appear ugly only to an all too analytical seeing, which knows not how to appreciate beauty. To a synthetic appreciation even the darkest spots will reveal themselves as elements of a marvellous harmony ; the picture will be a thing of spotless beauty, not in spite of but because of all the spots that it is made to contain. But how far can the analogy carry us? Is the cosmic situation quite analogous to the harmony of an aesthetic product? In the first place, the beauty of a picture or a painting is a derivative one, derived

as it is from a harmonious combination of a multitude of factors ; and the perfection of the whole is here a resultant perfection, resulting as it does from the co-operation of parts which are imperfect in isolation. But is the perfection that we attribute to the Supreme of a resultant or derivative character? The suggestion is, as mystics affirm, repugnant to the profoundest spiritual experience. The world of variety does indeed derive its meaning and significance from the Supreme Spirit which creatively sustains it, but the Spirit itself is perfect intrinsically, quite independently of its various modes of manifestation. The Spirit is Beauty itself, Goodness itself, Wisdom itself, and does not derive its wealth of content from the variety of its self-manifestation. So the great Indian philosopher Sankara is not prepared to look upon the world of appearance or upon the phenomenon of evil which belongs to the world of appearance even as a contributory factor in the harmony and perfection of the Spirit. The Spirit is, in his judgment, absolutely unrelated and unmediated Perfection ; evil and appearance spring from a logically indescribable, a real-unreal sort of principle, the principle of Ignorance, and as such they have nothing either to add to or subtract from the plenitude of the Spirit.

In the second place, it must be noted that the view of evil as an element in the harmony of Reality betrays a confusion of standpoints. The very sting of the problem of evil consists in the fact that an event or happening is taken as it is not, it is taken in isolation from other events and happenings with which it is inseparably entwined, it is torn away from its proper context. To suggest that an event *qua* conjoined with and supplemented by other events is an element in a harmony is to drop out of account the specific character of evil. An event *qua* isolated and abstracted from its larger setting—that gives us the essence of evil. It is the all too analytical seeing, the isolating imagination, which turns an event into an evil. Can this isolation and abstraction be treated as a contributory factor in an over-ruling harmony? In its account of evil, Pantheism leaves out of account its specific character as evil and fastens upon the underlying fact of interconnectedness. It is not the appearance *qua* supplemented and modified, but the appearance *qua* appearance, which makes the evil what it is ; but still, the Pantheists like Spinoza and Bradley make the former the basis of their explanation, and silently drop the latter from consideration.

The Indian thinker Sankara looks upon evil as upon all appearance as possessed of an illusory type of existence. Evil, which is a pervasive and ineluctable feature of our life seems to be real so long as the standpoint of Ignorance persists, but it vanishes like a nightmare immediately the supreme Truth is realised. Not only is evil unreal ; it cannot even be treated as an "entity transmuted into an element" of the Absolute's harmony, or into a contributory factor of the supreme

Perfection. The Absolute is perfect and free from all inner contradictions, intrinsically, essentially and eternally without therefore having to derive the elements of its perfection from the field of manifestation. Evil then cannot in any sense be said to contribute to the perfection of the Absolute. Evil as an evil, or as a self-discrepant appearance, must in all cases fall outside the Absolute, and this even Bradley is bound to admit, as he actually does. Then, again, the underlying reality of the world of evil and appearance is not an infinite diversity of factors co-operating to produce the resultant harmony of the Absolute, but is rather the eternally unmodified and intrinsic perfection of the Spirit, just as the rope is the unmodified substratum of the illusory snake which appears on its locus through ignorance. Now, the Śankarite position, an improvement though it is upon the viewpoint of Western Pantheism, is itself exposed to two grave objections. First, on the view of Śankara, there is evil in our life, because life is essentially a product of Ignorance. This makes evil an inescapable and intrinsic feature of life. In order to get away from evil one must get away from the whole business of living with an ascetic disdain and become absorbed in static perfection. The ideal of Divine Life, the aspiration to a completely divine transformation of our terrestrial existence, must be contemptuously set aside as a pathological dream, or a meaningless utopia. Secondly, a monistic phenomenalism of Śankara reduces our life to a shadow-play without significance. It fails to perceive that Life is a genuine manifestation of the Absolute, a rhythmic expression of the ineffable delight that the Spirit is. Whereas Bradley in his eagerness to maintain an essential connection, an organic relation between reality and appearance, spirit and life, makes the perfection of the former dependent upon the richness of the latter, Śankara in his eagerness to maintain the unsullied purity or the immaculate perfection of the Spirit, robs life of all significance and leaves the world hanging mysteriously by an invisible thread of *Avidyā*. True, evil is, in ultimate analysis, an outcome of Ignorance ; but unless a purpose is assigned to the functioning of *Avidyā*, unless *Avidyā* is exhibited as a mode of operation of the Absolute itself, and until finally evil is known to play a significant role in the scheme of phenomenal existence, no satisfactory solution can be reached. We are condemned to the necessity of creating fresh difficulties in an attempt to remove older ones, unless every item of experience is accorded a place in the one significant scheme of things, and unless all principles of explanation are unified in one master light of our thinking. To sum up, the objection against the Śankarite position is that it simply denies the reality of evil instead of assigning it its proper place in the scheme of self-manifestation of the Absolute, and that it leaves *Avidyā* as an indescribable mystery instead of deriving it from the expansive urge of delight that is in Brahman.

There are some who declare that the path of wisdom lies in frankly admitting evil as a final inexplicability. Lotze, for example, tells us in his *Philosophy of Religion* that the only solution of the problem of evil lies in appreciating the inscrutable wisdom of God. Having found all current solutions unsatisfactory he considers it prudent not to strain human ingenuity beyond its utmost limit. Neither the finitude of the created universe, nor the pervasiveness of Law in Nature, appears to him to contain any rational justification of evil. The finitude of the created universe can at best account for some lack of perfection or some deficiency within it ; but it is no adequate reason for the positive fact of evil, for our sufferings and miseries. "That a thing is finite may lead to a want of good, but cannot be a reason for that want or deficiency assuming the positive character of evil".\* Then the pervasiveness of Law in Nature is also, in Lotze's opinion, no satisfactory solution of evil. He says that all mathematical, machanical and physical truth might remain true, and yet there need not be any evil in the world on that account. The evil is rather due to the nature, the inner changeability, of the things merely given, which might have been otherwise, and whose reality depends on the Divine activity. So, instead of approaching the problem of evil from the standpoint of human reason, Lotze prefers to fall back upon the inscrutable wisdom of God.

While Lotze has recourse to the inscrutable wisdom of God, Bradley takes shelter behind the incomprehensible mystery of the Absolute's nature. That the Absolute is an all-embracing harmony, that Reality is a perfectly self-coherent structure, is, in his view, an *a priori* certainty. The experience of evil cannot be allowed to override that certainty. To suggest that evil contradicts or takes away from the harmony and perfection of the Absolute is tacitly to assume an exhaustive knowledge of the Absolute which is impossible. All that we know of reality points to the conclusion that evil must be submerged in its over-ruling harmony. While the harmonisation of evil in the Absolute is a necessity of reason, there are also indications in our experience of the possibility of that harmonisation, even though we do not know in what specific way it is so harmonised. We know that what appears discordant to our isolating imagination obtains reconciliation in a wider context or in a deeper perspective, and what is unbearably painful to an exclusive attention is submerged in the general happiness or joyousness that characterises our state of balanced poise. We do not indeed know specifically how the painful and discordant notes of evil are tuned in the Absolute, but that is a difficulty, a minor inexplicability, which cannot nullify one's general philosophic outlook. Armed with the necessity of reason and the indication of possibility in experience, Bradley has no hesitation in

\* Lotze's *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 142.

declaring the actuality of evil's reconciliation. He invokes the principle of "somehow" in support of that declaration,—somehow is evil reconciled in the harmonious whole.

There can be no denying that the finite can by no means contradict the Infinite. The Infinite is the very presupposition of the finite. Speculative thought requires the Infinite as a principle of harmony free from all contradictions, and integral spiritual experience discloses it as the ineffable Spirit who is the foundation and fulfilment of all values. It is not however enough that the phenomenon of evil should be resolved into the harmony of the Absolute Spirit. The philosophic impulse refuses to be satisfied unless some light can be thrown upon the how of the appearance of evil out of the Absolute, unless, in other words, we can obtain a glimpse into the origin, purpose and function of evil. The wisdom of God is indeed inscrutable, but that should not prevent us developing a connected and luminous vision of the universe as a thoroughly intelligible and significant scheme. The inscrutability in question signifies, first, that the supreme Spirit is ineffable and unfathomable so that its infinite content can neither be exhausted nor adequately expressed, and, secondly, that our thought must be consummated in intuition for a luminous apprehension of reality. The fact that our intellect cannot carry us sufficiently far is no reason why we should not advance in our quest of Truth beyond a mere statement of problems.

It has been suggested by some eminent thinkers that there is evil in the world, because it is through constant struggle with the forces of evil that personality can be developed and character moulded. Soul-making, they contend, is the typical business of the universe, and in order to have that business done it is necessary that our life in the world should be, as it is, a chapter of accidents. As "a vale of soul-making", the world cannot afford to be a land of lotus-eating. It is in the medium of an apparently hostile environment that the heroic types of soul can be developed. If it appears to us that "contingency is writ large across the face of Nature" or that "there is an unfathomable injustice in the nature of things", we need not be overwhelmed by such appearances. It is the very contingent and tragic features of Nature which make her the fittest medium and an excellent training-ground for the soul. It can be readily admitted that there is a profound truth in this view of the matter. We cannot afford to ignore the depth of insight that inspires it. But still the view of evil as an educative agency does not seem to express the whole truth about the matter. Lotze's criticism that a better and more decent machinery should have been devised by the All-mighty for manufacturing perfect souls is not without application to the above view. Even though all pains and sufferings may be forgotten on the attainment of an exalted state, that does not justify the necessity of having passed through



unbearable sufferings. Moreover, the author of *The Idea of God* tells us that the typical business of the universe which is full of mishaps and accidents is to develop souls so that through the development of unique souls the Absolute may obtain an enrichment of being. But can there be a further enrichment of being of That which is essentially perfect? And can the Perfect desire or permit an enrichment of being through terrible sufferings endured by others? Could not His own enrichment and the development of finite souls have achieved through a system of means consistent with His loving and merciful nature? Embarrassing questions are these all no doubt.

The difficulty as to the fulfilment of the divine purpose through sufferings endured by *others* is enhanced by the hypothesis of an extra-cosmic God. When the intense sufferings endured by one function as instrumental to the fulfilment of another's purpose, we cannot help thinking of the latter as diabolical, or, as at least anything but divine, if not the very opposite of the Divine. But why start with the assumption that God remains aloof from our sufferings, and that the cries of the human heart do but occasionally and faintly reach His ears. He is indivisibly present in every man, and all creatures are but God manifested in various forms. It is therefore God Himself who undergoes untold sufferings in the shape of human beings. And He does so for His own fuller manifestation at different centres. Sufferings then are not God's device for the training of other beings; they are but circumstances accompanying the process of His increasing self-manifestation in and through different individuals.

When Pringle Pattison says that soul-making is the typical business of the world, he utters indeed a profound truth. But this soul-making, the shaping and moulding of unique personalities, is not intended to enrich the being of God. There can be no addition to perfection, no further enrichment of that infinitely rich being who remains infinite even after an infinite is subtracted from Him (Purnāt purnamādāya purnamevāvashisyate). So the truth behind the moulding of human personalities is the progressive manifestation of the Infinite in the finite, the increasing self-revelation of the Divine in human form, the gradual self-unfoldment of the Spirit in self-created conditions apparently opposed to, and *toto caelo* different from, His nature. He is pure existence, pure knowledge, pure bliss, and He seeks self-manifestation in apparent contraries, in the apparent non-being, inconscience and dull monotony of matter. This gives us the profoundest secret of the world-process, the deepest mystery of divine play,—the play of hide and seek between Spirit and Matter, between God and Nature,—the Spirit hiding itself behind Nature and seeking His rediscovery through her evolutionary endeavour, Nature getting separated from Spirit and seeking re-union through the aspirations of her noblest creatures.

But is not God absolute bliss itself? *If delight is the very stuff* and essence of Divine Being, what point is there in asserting that God seeks delight through a process of self-manifestation? Fullness or abundance of delight seems incompatible with a further search after delight; perfection renders meaningless all further seeking and yearning. On deeper reflection it will be found that the above criticism rests upon a poor idea about the divine delight. Why limit God to one form of delight only, to the delight of immutable being, or to the unvarying delight of timeless self-absorption? There is a delight of becoming as much as a delight of being, a delight of change and movement as much as a delight of permanent tranquility. The essence of the delight of becoming consists in unceasing creation, or to put it more philosophically, in expressing in infinite time the infinite possibilities that are inherent in the infinite Spirit. In His intrinsic being, the supreme Spirit is above all change and movement, and is self-sufficient in His pure delight. But the Spirit has also an aspect of becoming, an aspect of dynamic flow and sportive activity. His delight of becoming consists in the variable manifestation of the infinite possibilities of His nature. It is the self-expansive urge of the delight of becoming which accounts for His Will to self-manifestation in the contraries of His nature. The self-luminous Spirit takes a plunge into the dark inconscience of matter, in order that through a conquest of darkness the glories of the Spirit may be manifested in material conditions. Evil is the name which man gives to the perturbation consequent upon the plunge of Light into Darkness and the resulting struggle. Sorrows and sufferings are incident to the self-expression of the Spirit in matter.

Lotze is perfectly right when he says that evil is due not to the uniform operation of a system of natural laws, but to the inner nature and changeability of the things merely given which might have been otherwise, and whose reality depends upon the Divine activity. Following the guidance of reason, he sees no way of reconciling this fact with our conception of the Divine. So he abandons in despair all rational approach to the problem and chooses to fall back upon God's inscrutable wisdom. Plato maintains that the ultimate source of all evil is Non-Being or intractable matter. To vindicate the absolute purity of God and the incorruptibility of the Form of the Good, he interposes a yawning chasm of ontological discontinuity between Non-Being and Being, between Matter and Form, or between Nature and Soul. This is throwing overboard the truth of Unity in the interests of the empirical fact of disharmony. While Lotze in his attempt at synthetic reconciliation invokes the incomprehensible, Plato prefers a clear formulation of the fundamental categories of experience to a final attempt at synthesis. Sri Aurobindo shows the way of synthesis without sacrifice of the legitimate rights of reason.

The Truth that emerges from the depth of spiritual experience is sure to have the ready acceptance of reason provided the latter does not insist upon the absoluteness of its limited moulds. Matter which causes by its recalcitrance the tragic features of life is not the absolute negation of the Spirit. It is rather a form of expression of the Spirit itself, it represents the lowest limit of the gradual self-concealment of the luminous Spirit, a plunge of consciousness into its apparent opposite. In the heart of God there is a desire to fulfil His limitless possibilities, a desire to express His bottomless delight in ever unique forms. Matter with its apparently hostile and recalcitrant character provides an excellent stage on which the thrilling drama of life may be enacted.

Integral Idealism looks upon the world as an outflow of the fullness of joy that is at the heart of God. The problem of pain is therefore particularly acute for it. Granted that matter is the source of all sufferings that torment our material existence. Granted further that "eternal and immutable delight of moving out into infinite and variable delight of becoming" is the root cause of the Spirit's falling asleep in matter with a view to a reawakening in unique conditions. But still the question would arise: Is not the essential painfulness of embodied existence an outrage upon the nature of the Spirit which is pure delight? Is not there a palpable incongruity between the joy of being and the sorrow of living? It should be pointed out here that the view that our life is essentially and overwhelmingly painful is an error of perspective; it is an exaggeration due to the magnifying power of our emotional susceptibility. To a dispassionate view the sum of pleasure is sure to appear far greater than the sum of pain, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. This is the sole explanation of the universal and overpowering instinct of self-preservation, and of the overmastering will-to-live. Pain affects us much more intensely, and the sum of pain looms much larger than the greater sum of pleasure, precisely because pain is abnormal to our being, contrary to our nature and tendency and is experienced as an outrage on our existence, an offence and external attack on what we are and seek to be. The normal satisfaction of our existence which is always there regardless of objective circumstances affects us as something neutral and as neither palpably pleasant nor painful. It is because pleasure is normal that we do not treasure it, hardly even observe it, unless it intensifies into some acuter form of itself, into a wave of happiness, a crest of joy or ecstasy.

It is common knowledge that man has greater capacity for feeling pain than creatures at the lower stages of evolution. Anthropology has brought this further fact to light that the savages feel more intensely than the cultured. Indeed, the more mentally active anyone is, the less is he capable of pain. These facts point to one irresistible

conclusion, namely that, pain is an indication of the undue hoarding or storing of that primal creative energy which is intended for further evolution. "All pain is a measure, if a crude one", says Gerad Heard, "of the degree of vital creative energy in any creature, animal or man".\* The animal does not suffer much because he is a living fossil; there is not much of unused vital energy within him. The savage suffers most when injured, because there is a huge reservoir of untapped evolutionary energy within him which is wasted in suffering. A cultured man, a man given to the higher pursuits of life, or, in other words, engrossed in creative endeavours, suffers little, because he succeeds in drawing off an amount of his pent-up energy and in directing it along higher channels. The acute sufferings of the present day are due to the fact that our evolution, balked and thwarted, lopsided and unbalanced, has reached an unprecedented crisis. Prevented from an increasing expansion, a grow-universalisation, our consciousness, has been strangled into separative egoism, both individual and national. Since then suffering is a pathological symptom of evolution balked and thwarted, there must be a way out of it, and that way lies in letting the evolutionary energy resume in us the work of universal harmony through a radical change or mutation of our consciousness. Suffering is not an inseparable feature of life. What is needed to get out of suffering is not to turn one's back upon Life and its divergent currents. The root-cause of suffering is not the will to live but rather a failure to co-operate with the growing evolution of the Creative Energy. The remedy for all suffering is to release the pent-up primal energy to allow it to energise higher centres of consciousness and to lift ourselves out of the stagnant pools of strangled individualised consciousness. As Bergson had the vision to see, it is through dynamic self-identification with the creative impetus,—the impetus which is all-embracing love,—that we can attain to a state of unalloyed joy which is beyond all mixed feelings of pleasure and pain.

That suffering is not an essential or inalienable feature of life but only a passing phase, a vanishing quantity, has been made abundantly clear by Sri Aurobindo in his *The Life Divine*. Suffering is a shadow cast by evolving Ignorance in its gradual movement towards Knowledge. Or, to look at it from another side, pain and pleasure are both distorted reflections on the surface, or on the screen of Ignorance which envelopes our surface-being, of the secret delight of existence. They serve a transitional end and betray themselves as an outcome and arrangement of our imperfect evolution.

Pleasure, pain and neutral feeling are, so observes Sri Aurobindo, mechanical reactions of our nervous and mental being to the touches and shocks of the external world. There is no absoluteness or

\* *Pain, Sex and Time*, by Gerad Heard, p. 49.

necessity in these reactions except the necessity of habit. The habit however ought to change and does change in the course of evolution. It can be changed by a strong will to evolve. It is common knowledge that things which are agreeable to some are disagreeable to others, and appear either agreeable or disagreeable to the same individual in different conditions or different stages of development. Our mind is more flexible in its responses to the world's touches than the nervous being which is more a slave of habit and more accustomed to a certain constancy of response. To our nervous being, victory, success, honour, good fortune of all kinds are pleasant things in themselves, absolutely ; whereas their opposites such as defeat, failure, disgrace, evil fortune of all kinds appear to be unpleasant things in themselves, absolutely. But experience shows that man can rise above this necessity of habitual reactions and can meet all life's circumstances, all the shocks of the world, with a perfect indifference, and can even accept them all with a perfect gladness.

But what is the purpose or reason behind those habits of response which account for the triple vibration of pleasure, pain and indifference of our sensational being? Sri Aurobindo points out that these habits of reaction are the devices of Nature for the protection of imperfectly developed beings against the attack of external forces. From the standpoint of the individual, the world is a play and a complex shock of 'multitudinous forces. Some of these forces are unfavourable to the individual in his present stage of limited growth, and so the individual recoils or shrinks from them through pain. The Sanskrit term *Jugupsā* is very appropriate to denote this attitude of recoil or shrinking. The shocks and forces which are favourable appear pleasant and thrilling. This diversity of reaction continues so long as the soul is subject to Matter and to egoistic limitation in Mind. At present the consciousness-force within us is limited, cut off as it is by limiting Maya from the universal Consciousness-Force. So it cannot receive equally and calmly all the shocks of the world. Pain and pleasure are in truth but currents, one imperfect and the other perverse, but still currents of the delight of existence. Owing to the egoistic limitation of our being and the strangulation of our consciousness we cannot properly receive these currents and perceive the *Rasa*, the essence of delight, which is in everything. Art and Poetry give us a glimpse into this universal *Rasa* through a detached and delightful representation of the sorrowful, the terrible, and even the horrible or repellent. The aesthetic reception of contacts is however only a partial and imperfect representation of the delight of existence, and it is conditioned by the liberation of one part of our nature from practical attachment or egoistic sensation. The pure delight in all things, the *Rasa* in the heart of all existence, is in truth supramental and supraesthetic in character. An adequate experience

of this delight is possible only through our liberation in all the parts of our nature. It is "the universal aesthesis, the universal standpoint of knowledge, the universal detachment from all things and yet sympathy with all in our nervous and emotional being" which alone can give us an access to the universal *Rasa* in all its purity. While the aesthetic attitude is one of passive contemplation of the underlying harmony and beauty, the spiritual attitude is one of active participation in the creative delight. The aesthetic attitude admits sorrow, terror, horror and disgust as elements in spite of which an underlying harmony is perceived to be there; the spiritual attitude instead of stopping short at a mere perception of the underlying harmony proceeds to eliminate all discrepant and painful features of life in response to a deeper realisation and with a view to a fuller manifestation of the pure unalloyed joy which is hidden in the heart of things.

Four stages may be distinguished in one's attitude to sorrow and suffering. An individual's instinctive reaction to pain is, as has already been observed, one of instinctive recoil and shrinking (*jugupsā*). Such a reaction has a purpose to fulfil so long as the soul remains bound to the fetters of ego-centric existence. An aspiration to emerge into the freedom of a fuller life in harmony with others must replace *jugupsā* by *titiksā*, that is to say, must replace the attitude of shrinking and contraction by that of boldly facing, enduring and conquering all shocks of existence. The spirit of brave endurance and conquest leads on to what has been called Equality (*Samatā*). This equality or equanimity of mind may be of two kinds. First, there is what may be called equal indifference to all contacts. This consists in the maintenance of unperturbable calm and balance of mind in the presence of the dualities of existence. The stoic indifference to pains and pleasures, to sorrows and joys alike, and the ascetic detachment and serenity in the face of life's vicissitudes, are expressions of this form of equality. This equal indifference or passive non-responsive serenity is based upon perception of the transcendental element in our nature. There is, however, a deeper kind of equality which springs from an integral realisation of Reality in its universality as well as in its transcendence. This equality does not express itself as an equal indifference to all contacts, but as an equal gladness in all contacts. Spiritual equality, to which all the world's touches are but messages of joy, is born of freedom from egoity and a consequent perception of everything in its proper perspective and in its inmost essentiality. Sustained by the delight of being, it proceeds to participate in the variable delight of becoming, and issues in an unceasing effort for a fuller manifestation of that creative delight. The equal reception of all events as variations of delight is not necessarily always the result of an indirect process running through different stages. It can also be straightway developed, so contends

Sri Aurobindo, through a direct transformation of the triple vibration of pain, pleasure and indifference into *Ananda*, though that would be enormously difficult for ordinary humans.

The ethical aspect of the problem of suffering calls for some consideration before the chapter should be closed. Why does God invent torture as a means of test or as a passport to fuller life? Is not such a God inferior to the highest moral ideal that inspires his creatures? Is suffering in the nature of punishment that God devises for the sins committed by men? But sins are in fact born of man's limited knowledge and his limited power, his ignorance and weakness which must ultimately be traced to God's creative act. The real cause of sin is not the freedom of man but rather the inadequate freedom of the human being, his subjection to the cravings and desires of the lower nature. Responsibility for the human soul's entanglement in the lower nature, or non-discriminating self-identification therewith, must ultimately be borne by God himself. But all these difficulties can be set down to one initially wrong supposition, namely that, there is an extra-cosmic Deity, an external ethical Personality, who conducts the business of creating and governing all creatures according to some eternally fixed ethical principles. This is a form of anthropomorphism,—an application of the characteristics of human nature to the understanding of the significance of the world-process. The view of the world as the handiwork of an extra-cosmic Deity belongs to the primitive phase of philosophic thinking. We have already seen that the world-process is in truth the process of variable realisation of the delight of being moving out into delight of becoming. So it is God Himself who in human forms endures and passes through the various experiences of pleasure and pain towards a richly diversified manifestation of the supreme delight. The sinfulness and internal self-discrepancy of man marks a stage in the movement of the Spirit itself from the unconsciousness of material Nature towards the superconscient harmony of gnostic existence, from an existence of blind uniformity and iron necessity to a life of luminous unity and complete freedom, perfect mutuality and profoundest love. Western thinkers like Bradley and Bosanquet had the depth of insight to realise that the ethical point of view can by no means be made absolute. The moral distinctions are relative to a definite transitional stage in the self-unfoldment of the Spirit, and as such they must not be treated as the ultimate category of interpretation. Characteristic of the divided consciousness of man, they are bound to change, and change essentially, when he grows into the undivided consciousness of the all-embracing Spirit. At the pre-human levels we have a non-moral or infra-ethical layer of existence. The self-discrepancies of human morality point to its self-completion in a supra-moral consciousness that would lay the foundation of a far better and

fuller life, the life of Truth and the life of Love. The fundamental thing, that which is common to all stages, is the Spirit's secret will to self-expression. At the human stage, whatever hurts this self-expression, whatever hampers the progressive development of his limited personality, is considered evil; and whatever helps, raises, ennobles it is accounted good. But with the gradual development of the human personality, with the increasing self-expression of the Spirit within him, he must exceed the morality of his divided consciousness and act spontaneously on the basis of a conscious realisation of the unity of all existences in the Spirit.

In an appreciative estimate of Sri Aurobindo the great reconciler, the *Times Literary Supplement*, observes in one of its issues in 1944:

"Aurobindo has his limitations. Like almost all Hindus he is a supreme optimist. There is no devil in his universe. Everybody and everything is divine or striving to be divine . . . Finally, Aurobindo overstresses the importance of knowledge. Darkness, the incomprehensible, the meaningless, which pervade life and thought, are not even envisaged by him."

Now, it is true that Sri Aurobindo is a supreme optimist. But his optimism rests not upon a denial of the existence of evil or the working of the devil, but upon his emphatic refusal to accept them as essentially unconquerable forces and as ultimately independent principles. Like Bergson he believes that the duality of pain and pleasure is capable of being transmuted into pure unalloyed joy, as, in his view, that duality is essentially a distorted reflection of the pure delight of existence upon the realm of Ignorance. The devil is not denied by Sri Aurobindo. The devil or the undivine is surely there in the world of manifestation; it is the power of Darkness, the power that offers resistance to all movements towards Light. Only, Sri Aurobindo is not prepared to accord to the devil an equality of status with the Divine. It serves as a principle of antithesis in the dialectical movement of divine self-realisation. Opposition has a necessity for fuller self-affirmation; resistance is needed for a glorious conquest. The hostile force is born of Darkness, but that Darkness is neither an illusion nor an absolute negation of the luminous Spirit. Paradoxical though it may sound, it is a form of expression of the Spirit itself, the Spirit's utter self-concealment or involution in an apparent opposite. The function of Darkness is to provide the Spirit with a basis of unique self-revelation in apparent contraries, a strange stage of self-unfoldment. Howsoever incomprehensible to man's limited understanding, it is not meaningless. The meaning of it is to be sought in the joy of self-expression,—in the play of hide and seek between Spirit and Nature that this cosmic drama is. It is true that Sri Aurobindo lays much stress upon knowledge, and makes it central in the life of a divine worker. But by knowledge Sri Aurobindo does



not mean intellectual illumination divorced from Power and Will. True knowledge is an affair of the total self, it is the self-realising or self-effectuating self-illumination of the Spirit. It is without doubt by force of such knowledge that Darkness or *Avidyā* can be dissipated, and along with Darkness its offspring, the Devil.

# The Integral Vision in History

BY SISIRKUMAR MITRA

The discovery of his past opened before man a new world of knowledge. It made him conscious of his own heritage and inspired him to the study of his early story. Soon, however, he wanted to know how the story developed, how it was given its coherence and *ensemble*. And the result of it was the idea of the 'History of History', the concept of a method and manner in the historical recordation of human affairs. The idea varied according to the approaches made to the subject by different minds. But whatever the nature of this divergence, the evidence of archæology and other kindred sources have proved beyond doubt that culture in the past was always, as it is today, an all-embracing development, an integral flowering of the many-sided genius of man. And no one form of it however important to his progress—can fulfil its purpose unless and until it is given scope enough to fructify along with the other forms, all of which are the component parts of an organic whole. Indeed, culture can achieve its true aim only when it conduces to the growth of man into his higher possibilities, when all its expressions converge towards preparing him for a greater than his present life in the Ignorance. Man's first impulse to create and the dawning sense in him of his own power initiated and impelled that ceaseless striving through which he has been gaining new masteries and proceeding now with sure, now with faltering steps towards the distant, divine goal of his earthly existence. History begins with a portrayal of this æonic pilgrimage and goes on increasing in content as man advances enlarging the sphere of his creative activity. Thus with the progress of man the idea of history also becomes wider and more defined; but history will achieve its crowning success when it will be able to interpret this march of man in the light of its inner significance.

Man by his mind builds stories about his adventures on earth, vaguely suggesting various kinds of future for himself; but none of them is complete, inasmuch as it fails to take into account the real intention in those adventures. Besides, being limited to its own range, mind cannot rise into the world of perfect knowledge; neither can it have a total view of things. And it is beyond it to have a clear idea of the ultimate destiny of man. The key has, therefore, to be sought in the integral vision only glimpsed by the early mystics but now fully seen and possessed by the Master-Seer of the race. It is the vision of the one infinite Reality unfolding itself in the drama of

cosmic evolution and seeking to manifest in man the delight, harmony and perfection of its own transcendence. To depict the story of how evolutionary Nature endeavours through the ages to prepare man for that glorious consummation will indeed be the truest function of history. What follows is an attempt to point out the vast scope history offers for a comprehensive envisaging of its aims and objects, and to study through it the growth of an integralising historical idealism, and, lastly, to show from that standpoint how man as a race marches on in his journey towards the fulfilment of that vision. It is not possible within the compass of a single article to give even an outline of a large subject such as this. The present therefore can only be a brief introduction.

## I

A biography describes the life of a great man. It shows how he lived and worked for a noble cause. It is thus a record of those activities of his for which he is loved and remembered. History may be called a kind of biography, not, however, of a particular man but of a people or of the whole of mankind. All the different periods in the life of a heroic soul—his childhood, youth and manhood—come to be told by one who portrays it in its proper perspective. But there comes a time in that life when the curtain is rung down on its play on earth, the person having made his exit from it leaving behind him the legacy of the golden deeds he performed to the everlasting benefit of the race, especially of the people among whom he was born. It is, then, his biography that helps to perpetuate his memory. Likewise, there are many great peoples in history, such as the Egyptians, the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and later, the Greeks and the Romans, who did live a long and fruitful life during which they built up the splendid structures of their civilisation, which are regarded as definite landmarks in the cultural progress of mankind. But nothing of their achievements remains today except the relics and antiquities most of which lay buried under the earth. They have gone out of the stage never to appear on it again. It is the voice of their history—the old monuments articulating it—that defies time and proclaims what they did to weave the many-coloured texture of their creative life.

But it is not that the same thing has happened to all the civilised peoples of the ancient world, that after they had lived their span of life they were overtaken by decadence and death. There are peoples however who are contemporaries of those oldest ones and yet claim to have kept burning to this day the lamp of their ancient culture, notwithstanding the vicissitudes they have passed through in the long

course of their history. History differs from biography in the sense that the latter ends with the life of one man, whereas the former does not or need not do so, because it is concerned not with the life and work of a particular individual but with the aspirations and struggles, the failures and victories of the never-ending stream of humanity. The world has in it peoples who exist today as they have been doing from time immemorial to which they trace the beginnings of their culture and civilisation. Indeed, China and India continue in history as the inheritors of a magnificent past whose spirit still lives in their creative strivings which throughout the ages have never known any full stop: that is to say, both of them yet retain their old strength and energy and are able to make ever-new endeavours, producing thereby results that compare not unfavourably with the marvels of their ancient heritage. Nevertheless, the histories of all the peoples of the world, dead or living, have their place in the larger conception of history being one unbroken record of the whole life of humanity and of the manifold deploying of its powers in every sphere of its activity from the very dawn of its civilised existence on earth. It is World-History which is 'One'.

What then are the elements that form the contents of history? and how are they woven together? Biography, as already said, helps us to learn about the various ways in which a heroic soul expresses himself. But all these expressions are more or less tuned to one particular theme or subject. It is rarely that a genius proves many-sided in the higher sense of the term. A Leonardo da Vinci is certainly an exception in the world of human greatness. Generally speaking, every great man has one song to sing, one message to deliver. And everything else that he does may have in it something remarkable and worthy of him, but it is not that for which he is immortalised in history. Rabindranath Tagore, whatever his contribution towards the rural and educational uplift of his country, will be remembered by posterity more as a master-poet and singer than as a champion of joy and freedom in education or a pioneer in the field of rural reconstruction. Obviously enough, history cannot limit itself to a particular subject. It has to speak about the creative expressions, not of one man, but of a whole people consisting of individuals of various natures, such as saints and sages, prophets and philosophers, poets and mystics, artists and scientists, rulers and statesmen and so many other kinds of men, great and small, who all of them play their respective parts in the common corporate life of the people among whom they are born, and thereby enrich and exalt its culture and civilisation. It may be noted that history cannot ignore the work of ordinary men whose silent services keep life going and lend colour to it. To be a complete picture of every phase of man's activity history must include the man who tills the soil, the one who builds the house, the one who

by his labour makes the earth fit for man to live in happily. But all these find their place in history not as they merely are but through the contribution they make to the general progress of mankind. And it is for history to show how nations or peoples advance the cause of that progress, each following the law of its own being, its own line of self-development.

History therefore is a symphony of many tunes, an orchestra, as it were. It brings to light every effort of man to better and elevate himself both in his individual and collective life through the cultivation of the faculties that lie dormant in him. The progress of man means the progress of his culture, and man grows in culture in the measure his upward endeavours become fruitful. It is not that these efforts of man have always been crowned with success. Man has had to face failures; the obstacles in the way have many a time proved too difficult for him to overcome; and it is not unoften that he has himself forsaken the ideal and strayed into devious ways, lured by the desire to satisfy the lower aims of life. History will be far from its function if it fails to take cognisance of all these aberrations of man. It must at the same time point out that what was regarded as impossible in the past has already become a fact of present achievement, and that the ideals of today are the realities of tomorrow. History's is thus a comprehensive picture, an all-embracing panorama, epitomising on its canvas the vast and variegated drama of man. It tells us how in the past he built his society, how he responded to the call of the Spirit, how he worshipped his God, how he lived his life as a householder, how he evolved his culture, what dreams he dreamt, what visions he saw. It has therefore to speak of the spiritual seekings of man, of his religious impulses and his endeavours to cast them into forms, of the high ideas he expressed, of the arts and sciences he developed. It is thus a record of the spiritual, religious and aesthetic life of a people as well as that of its literary, scientific and political life. The religion and spirituality of a people give intimations of its soul. Its arts are the flowering of its inner aesthesis, an expression of its cult of the Beautiful. Its science and literature indicate the growth of its mental life. And its political strivings exhibit the evolutionary stages through which its vital-physical being passes acquiring more and more competence to organise and strengthen its corporate living, the chrysalis of the future unity of the race. History in this sense is a study of all the various creative activities of man. But in order that it may be a living organic whole it must point to the common ultimate goal towards which all these activities are leading, and probing beyond its normal depths, discover those deeper springs in man from where comes to him the impulsion to undertake his adventures in the world of 'sweetness and light' in which lies the seed of his ultimate perfection.

## II

It is unfortunate that history today should in most cases be so apathetic to its own high ideal and unable to discharge fully its noble mission. Of the many external forms in which the collective being of man manifests itself, that of politics has become most powerful and governs almost every field of human activity. And the integrity of history is one of those things which are being sacrificed at its altar. The ideas that a nation's well-being depends solely on its political capacity and that history has very little to do with anything which has no bearing on the political affairs of a people are largely responsible for the narrow outlook that regards history as nothing more than a mere narrative of political happenings, of the rise and fall of kings and empires. Freeman's view that 'history is past politics and politics is present history' reflects almost correctly the present-day trend in historical thinking. Politics in the past did help to create conditions favourable to the growth of culture. But the democratic institutions of ancient India, inspite of the fact that they are the prototype out of which similar institutions in various parts of the world have evolved, cannot certainly be called the most remarkable feature of her true greatness. It is her unparalleled spiritual genius that marks her out as the one country in the world where every expression of life is inspired and motivated by the godward tendency of her soul. Of what avail is history to India if it has no place in it for that which constitutes her real glory? The Mauryas of old did indeed build up the largest empire in the contemporary world and the system of polity they followed was an equally striking example of their political wisdom, yet it is not so much for these as for the unique religious idealism of one of their emperors that they deserve the particular attention of the historian. The triumph of Confucian thought over the imperial might of the Chinese emperors is one of those significant events which give character to the whole history of China in which the masterly works of her artists, poets and philosophers have always found greater prominence than the services of her legists, rulers and statesmen, eminent and constructive though they were. The history of ancient Greece will not only be incomplete but also a far from correct presentation of her great achievements if it speaks only of her democracy and nothing of the splendour that she was in art, literature and philosophy. And even today a modernist would resent a picture of the corporate life of his time if it describes only the brilliant successes and equally brilliant failures of the political experiments and makes no mention of its contribution in the world of culture.

In the early days of India and China, the ideology of politics was based on sound ethical principles. It did not show any such

aggressive tendency as is found in many political organisations of the modern age. In India a *chakravartin rājā* would mean the lord paramount of a vast empire who must, as the term connotatively implies, successfully discharge his twofold function of the king and the preserver of the Dharma. The king had moreover to declare himself as the servant of the people. It was his chief duty—dereliction of which might bring about his deposal—to uphold the ideals of the race and promote them by providing the necessary opportunities, so that his people might strive to live up to them both in their individual and collective life. The early monarchs of China were called 'statesmen-saints' who would never do anything without prayers invoking the aid of the gods. During later ages the 'scholar-officials' were the real rulers of the country whose sole care was to put into practice the democratic and ethical ideals set forth in the teachings of the great sage Confucius. Besides, "the Chinese civilisation is most decidedly organised for peace . . . And China is the one country in the world where it is considered disgraceful to be a soldier."<sup>1</sup> The ancient Greek ideas, propounded by Plato, of 'philosopher-king' and 'virtue-state', and that the king, according to Aristotle, is a king only when he furthers 'the highest good' of his subjects, seem to suggest that the world in three of its greatest culture-centres, China, India and Greece, passed through a common cycle or age of Dharma when the vision of its external form came to their thinkers mainly as a State founded on righteousness, the ideal rule of living. There is no evidence however as to how far the Greeks were able to give any practical shape to this seeing of their fathers, not to speak of later Europe who seemed to have broken away from Hellenic traditions; but history is certain that the Indians and the Chinese had been ever alive in their past to what their seers and lawmakers had laid down, and that they tried to follow them in all their social and political endeavours.

If the history of a people should be concerned with nothing but its political activities, then the history of many countries, especially of China and India, will have very little to say about their marvellous creations in the domain of culture, creations which have immensely enriched the civilisation of mankind. History books on these two countries, written from this political standpoint, do them a great injustice by presenting only one aspect of their creative life in which they fared perhaps not as remarkably as in those higher enterprises which, according to them, are the true aim of culture. And this narrow, truncated presentation proves all the more effectively misleading by the very reason of its being based upon a one-sided truth. It cannot therefore be accepted as a correct and complete study of

<sup>1</sup> H. A. Davies in *An Outline History of the World*, p. 77.

the historical evolution of these two oldest peoples of the world. Politics alone cannot be the sole content of history, at any rate, of the history of China and India. In other countries too, as in these, it has been almost always only one of their many activities. How can history, pledged to that one phase of a nation's life, be called an authentic record of all the multiple expressions of its soul, far less a revealer of the secret intention of Nature in it?

The connotation of the term politics cannot by any stretch be so widened as to include the various efforts that a people makes to accelerate its national progress. Man is of course not a 'political being' only. And an 'Ideal State' is neither possible in the existing order of things, nor can it be a solution for all the problems with which he is confronted in his collective life. Rather, it is his politics which, more than anything else, is the cause of the evils that afflict him today. It is true that politics has developed into a great force in the community-life of man and that without it the latter would not have attained its present organised form, but it is also true that the political ambitions of powerful nations, accentuated by exclusive materialistic tendencies, have blinded them to the higher values of life, leading them to aggrandise their collective ego with the result that in his international life man has arrived at a stage—a critical stage, no doubt,—in which he finds himself thrown into a vortex of continuous conflicts and clashes, deliverance from which or from the like of which is becoming more and more impossible for him to think of. What part history is playing to help in inciting nations to these disasters will be for the future historian to properly adjudge. But the deplorable fact about it is that history has lent its pages for the propagation of things which are anything but wholly true. Facts freely distorted, falsehoods wantonly fabricated, fill, and thereby desecrate, the pages of history, so that they might serve the so-called political purposes which disguise the selfish attempts of human groups to satisfy the egoistic demands of their body-politic. History must be rescued from its abject slavery to such low aims. It must cease to be guided by any parochial leaning, any ulterior motive, and stand out as the sovereign voice of truth, and nothing but the truth, about the whole life of man, about his ideals and aspirations and the various ways in which he tried to fulfil them.

Indeed, an integral outlook in history is impossible to develop so long as the latter does not present a complete picture of all the activities of man, so long as its writing is dominated by considerations other than purely historical. The historian has therefore to be above all petty passions and prejudices. He must discriminate between the true and the false, the genuine and the spurious, and accept nothing that does not stand the test of impartial scrutiny. His is the sacred task, he must never forget, of telling the whole story of man



in its true perspective, the story of his historical evolution, of the forces and personalities that have helped to guide it through the ages.

### III

Generally, the cultural achievements of man come into the pageant of history through the epochs and ages which are often associated with those great souls who compel universal homage not only by the dynamic excellence of their life and teachings but also by the service they render towards the intrinsic uplift of humanity. It is they who are the true creators of all that is of permanent value in the cultural expressions of the race. It is they who erect the ideal and inspire man to make the endeavour. Was it not the Rishis of ancient India who evolved the basic principles on which the Indian civilisation is founded? and are they not still cherished by the people with deep veneration? Do not Sri Krishna and his message figure as nothing else in the racial consciousness of India? The Buddha came and won his incomparable victory for all time. So did Christ. So did Asoka, the emperor whose unexampled concern for the moral welfare of mankind made him immortal in history. To the thinkers of ancient Greece, Europe owes all the great beginnings of her philosophy and idealism. The teachings of Lao-tze and Confucius as well as those of the Buddha are the very bed-rock of Chinese culture. All these and many others—lesser luminaries—are the torch-bearers of truth and light, the harbingers of new dawns in the life of humanity. Little doubt that their life and work should form part of the history of the world, particularly of the countries which are hallowed by their advent. It is these leaders and pioneers of the race who make the biographical element in history. But again, history is not these heroic souls only. There is no gainsaying the fact that theirs will always be the credit of being the discoverers of the goal, the explorers of the path which they have had often to hew out against enormous odds. But when humanity accepts the goal as its own and follows the path as that of its own destiny, its leaders then become one with it merging themselves in its common victorious march. History is concerned more with this march of man through the ages than with anything else. And these great souls come into its pages not so much for what they are by themselves as for what they do to further the cause of human progress. Every great epoch in a country's history represents the cultural advancement made during it by that country through the efforts to which it is inspired by the teachings of the master-spirits born in it. It is generally the development of the mind, its mastery of powers by which to fulfil its higher possibilities that is indicated in the results of these endeavours. History here

is the mirror that reflects the various stages of this progress of man from age to age. But to be true to its aim, it must also be a deep and penetrating study of every such activity as enlarges the domain of man's mind helping him thereby to grow in readiness for the greater illumination that is to come to him in the future as the crowning event of his sojourn on earth.

To the Chinese of old, history was like an unending scroll of pictures depicting the procession of humanity, and the scroll unrolls itself as man marches on, let us add, towards the destiny assigned to him by God. Ibn-e-Khaldun, the eminent Muslim thinker of the fourteenth century, discerned in historical ideology a world-view, an integral standpoint from which, he said, the progress of man as a whole should be assessed. But it was Voltaire, Condorcet and the French Encyclopaedists of the eighteenth century who gave a more definite form to this idea. Condorcet declared that man individually, and society as a whole, are capable of 'infinite improvement', and that history must show in bold relief the various stages of man's growth towards that 'destination'. The French group of 'philosophes' believed that absolute freedom in every sphere of life is indispensable for man to be able to achieve that progress. Emerson, the transcendentalist, saw in history the works of the one mind common to all individual men. Frederick Morrison called history an exponent of human affairs unfolding the oneness of mankind that perennially fulfils itself in time through every expression of its creative life. 'To Croce freedom is the key-note of man's historical evolution. History is nothing if not a record of man's struggle for liberation from the evils that stand in the way of his progress. There are historical writers who think that the process through which human collectivities have evolved into their present forms tends to culminate in a real and lasting solidarity of the whole of mankind. A more recent utterance is that of Nicolas Bedyayev who posits the idea of universal history as being the description of man's approach to his destiny in the light of the interaction between nature and the spirit in him. The emancipation of the spirit is therefore a necessity for man to achieve, the aim of his terrestrial existence. An ancient Indian definition regards history as a record of those endeavours of man through which he seeks to satisfy "the four legitimate motives of life, —his vital interests and needs, his desires, his ethical and religious aspiration, his ultimate spiritual aim and destiny, in other words, the claims of his vital, physical and emotional being, the claims of his ethical and religious being governed by a knowledge of the law of God and Nature and man, and the claims of his spiritual longing for the Beyond for which he seeks satisfaction by an ultimate release from an ignorant mundane existence."<sup>2</sup> The psychologists and social thinkers of ancient India

<sup>2</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 583.

showed their deep insight into human nature when they discovered these fundamental motives of life and pointed out the need for man to fulfil them so that he might grow in readiness for greater perfectibilities. The ultimate end however has always been an ascent and liberation into higher and higher states in the world of the Spirit, which have to be approached through a disciplined fruition of the essential inclinations of man, that is to say, of his nature,—a fruition held as *sine qua non* for the all-round development of his whole being. For history to study and analyse how man exerts himself to that end in the course of his earthly career would mean its being a synthetic delineation of all the stages of his labour and journey towards the goal in different periods and in different countries.

What exactly is the meaning of this march of man? What is its destination? and how is history to accomplish its purpose as an interpreter of this world-movement of humanity? History so far cannot be said to have tried in all seriousness to give any definite answer to these questions that arise in the mind of those who see in the annals of man the working out of a 'predetermined Plan' the study of which, they think, might lead him into an understanding of his future possibilities whose seeds lie embedded in all that he now is and in all that he does. The condition in the world today makes the demand for an answer all the more insistent. Indeed, the time has now come for history to present a revealing picture about the meaning and purpose of man's adventure on earth. Most of the appraisements, cited above, do indeed point however vaguely to an integral vision in history, but they are not at all clear as to how it would actualise. They state the problem, at least many important aspects of it, but they seem to be far from the right solution. And whatever attempt is made in that direction results in nothing definitive. That a march forward is there in everything man has done and is even now doing does no doubt suggest some kind of progress, a going forth, a venturing on from that which is known towards that which is in the womb of the future. An idea of change from one condition to a better one, a growth, mental, moral or spiritual, seems to be implicit in almost all the above views on the march of man in history. But none of them throws any light on the process through which the change takes place, neither do they indicate the ultimate purpose of such progressive changes. The historical synthesis defined by India during her age of Reason, made a nearer approach to the ideal but it also was unable to offer a satisfactory solution, because it emphasised a withdrawal into the Spirit, the Beyond, as the end of all human endeavour: all the expressions of life were recognised in it but that they should be one in their intention to grow into a greater, a more harmonious fulfilment was not within its scope.

The many ways in which mankind, whether in groups or in

totality, has taken part in that movement of change seem to be bewildering and make the principle of oneness in history somewhat difficult to understand. Indeed, a singleness of purpose is not so easy to trace in all that come to be known as the achievements of man. It is not only its many-sidedness but also the dissimilarity among the various forms of it that often hinders the correct perception of a common higher objective in all human strivings. But the more fundamental reason is that the power of the mind by which we try to penetrate into the secret mystery of the world-drama is limited to a plane which is veiled by the power of Ignorance. Mind is thus unable to give us a deeper, complete and integral view of things. Unless the Light from above breaks upon that plane and rends the veil and opens it to its native splendour of Knowledge from which it originated, mind remains confined to its own narrow groove, taking the parts for the whole, the fragments for the vast. And instead of tending towards a solution the problem becomes more complicated. This is indeed a crisis in the realm of historical thinking. The way out may be sought, as has always been done whenever mankind has been faced with a similar situation, in the teachings of the Pioneer-Souls of the race, who by rising into a higher consciousness have attained to the integral vision of the supreme truth of existence. An attempt is therefore made here to study the ideology of history from the standpoint of what Sri Aurobindo has laid down as the basic principle of an evolutionary manifestation in the earth. History here is a reflector of the dynamic process by which the divine plan is fulfilling itself in man through all the progressive stages of his life on earth.

#### IV

That history is a record of the progress man achieves through his various activities, mainly those of his creative life, has been already discussed. But the function of history is not merely to keep an inventory of those activities as they outwardly are. It must also discover in their, and through them in its own, development a principle of organic growth, that evolves with the progress of man; and when history does that it becomes itself more truly. As dry bones do not make a human body, but flesh, muscles, blood and so many other things and, above all, vital energy are necessary to make the body complete and living, so also a mere conglomeration of facts and events does not build history; it is the way in which they are presented bringing out their hidden meaning, the intention of Nature in them, that gives history its integrality and its force of life. It has already been shown how the various forms of the culture of a race become

the contents of its history, not as so many isolated units pieced together but as expressions of the creative soul of that race, through whose impact they coalesce into a historical wholeness mainly as its extrinsic phenomena. This is how the objective integration in history has taken shape, to which a definite impetus was given by the French Revolution that roused the nations of the world to a new sense of their rights and liberties and also of their past glories, providing a most favourable condition for their independent growth and evolution. Following the French Encyclopaedists the nations started to prepare their histories in which place was found for all the many ways in which they have tried to express their soul. And these registers of national achievements became more and more enriched and accentuated as archaeology and other allied sciences began to bring to light hitherto unknown evidences of the nations' antiquity and ancient heritage, whenever they were available. But what is missed in these early efforts is a world-standpoint, a global outlook ; and they betray a tendency to self-limitation in their scope and purpose, resulting in what are known as the so-called national histories of today. These regional records of human affairs have often been found to be stamped with a local colour which becomes deeper and louder as the particular human group inhabiting that region takes to a more and more egoistic and exclusive line of self-development. There is a centre in them and a force too, but it is a force that is too centrifugal to allow anything within their orbit to widen and expand. All objective studies suffer from this defect, and history, whenever committed to this aim, finds it difficult, if not impossible, to avoid such deterioration.

This trend—it may be called realistic—in historical thinking took a better turn when the first rays of a new idealism began to be visible on the intellectual horizon of man. If the previous stage had been one of individualism in which the peoples of the world proclaimed their newfound nationhood as a criterion of their distinctive historicity, the one that followed may be characterised as a subjective stage in which the study of human affairs was in the main directed towards the discovery of those laws and forces that seem to guide and motivate the destiny of man as a whole. The world-history came into existence and with it the concept of 'One History'. It is a kind of historical romanticism, as it were, which based its rationale on the essential unity of the human race and on the idea that the highest aim of all social endeavours is to achieve that unity by which alone can permanent peace be made possible. This is certainly a great advance in the idealising of history ; and it became more definite when the catastrophe of 1914 compelled man to think that the world could not be saved from such disasters in the future unless and until there was real solidarity among all its peoples. It went so far that even Utopia, that is to say, a perfect world of peace and plenty, seemed to figure in

the imagination of the historical idealists. It would not of course be true to say that these two stages are separatively apart. In fact, as in the general cultural cycle of mankind, so also in the cycle of its history the age of individualism has always in it certain elements of subjectivism. While therefore the nations were trying to find their own selves they came upon the fact that the force or forces that governed their destiny were everywhere the same and that there seemed to be a common goal for them. These ideas found more prominence in, and gave meaning and motive to, the writings of those historians of the present century who took up the entire field of human activity as their subject and the whole world as their canvas on which to depict the theme in all its variegated colours. But their vision was not deep enough to reveal to them the inward significance of the human affairs, for which a higher than mental power is necessary. Hence they could not get out of the constructions, built up by the mind, and founded in the norms of humanism that had its birth in the Renaissance of Europe. Man dominates the scene. It is he who is the master. It is he who is the poet, the artist, the thinker, the scientist. He is the builder of the State. He is the creator of the splendid things that make the fabric of his culture. He will therefore be the harbinger of the new world of peace and freedom that is to come in the future. It is a brilliant picture no doubt that the best of the history books, written in recent times, make it their business to give about the past, present and future of the human race.

Yet the solution of the problem is as distant today as it was before. Night sits heavy on the world without any prospect of the dawn. And man gropes in the darkness that thickens everywhere. It is true his subjective thinking has opened him to the truth that every noble deed he does, every beautiful work he produces, every great thought he expresses, is always for the whole human race with which he is one both in his cultural and social life, and that there is a common goal, the goal of freedom and unity towards which the whole humanity is moving through all its trials and travails. But this only gives a wider meaning to his ideal of humanism, and does not bring him the disillusionment needed. The question is, if it is only man who is the be-all and end-all of the human drama, if the stage is set only for him to people all its scenes and through them to sing the paeans of his own triumphs. If that is so, if that is the sole implication of what man has been in the past and is today, then it is difficult, if not impossible, to conjure up a bright picture of his future. And does not the gloom that envelops the world today point to the same conclusion? What then is the solution? And how is history to prove itself as an illuminating guide to the chequered march of man through the ages? The march has its periods of struggle against adverse forces, of exhaustion and failure and distress, when wrong paths are

taken. It has also its glorious days when victories crown the efforts of man. It is this march of humanity in all its stages that integrates itself first into the objective, and then or simultaneously with it, into the subjective elements of history. But the journey does not end, neither does the traveller show any sign of a complete discomfiture. It has rather been a ceaseless one ; only its continuity is marked by upward and downward movements. Thus, every period of decline is followed by fresh endeavours into which man is stirred by the un-failing force of life. Every deviation from the ideal is followed by a re-affirmation of it, which the past dawns of the race help to rekindle in its memory. And what is most glorious is that when man is faced with a crisis and a decisive step is to be taken, there appear on earth the Vibhutis and the Avatars of God who come to bring about his deliverance by awakening him to the light of the Spirit in him, the light that illumines the path for his soul to renew its striving for growth into greater possibilities. This light in man is the true truth of his life. It is to be aware of and live in it that the call has again and again come to him from the saviours of the race. Indeed, Christ's 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you', the Buddha's 'Be a lamp unto yourself', Sri Krishna's 'Seek refuge in the Lord seated in the heart', the declaration of the Rishi in the Upanishad 'Thou art *That*' are verily the same gospel in the teachings of all God-men and seers. This divinity of man, then, is the key to his journey on earth, whose meaning will be fully unveiled when the divine spark in the finite being flames into the supreme Fire of the Infinite.

## V

During her age of the Spirit the early mystics of India discovered—and Sri Aurobindo today has revisioned and revealed in its deeper significance—the hidden truth that in order to have delight of manifestation the One Reality becomes Many by plunging into the 'shadow of its own Light' and through it, first, organises the form of matter, itself remaining in it to create by its own upsurging Force conditions for a higher formulation of itself. And when Matter is ready the Force breaks into a splendour of living forms. When, again, these forms prove capable of a still higher evolution there appears man the mental being, possessing a power by which he is distinguished from the animal even as life is distinguished from matter. Matter, life and mind are thus the three fundamental principles in and through which the Supreme has taken forms and entered into the terrestrial becoming. But man as he now is, imperfect and subject to the Ignorance, cannot of course be the end that evolutionary Nature seeks to achieve. There must be yet higher statuses for her to ascend

to as the culmination of her evolutionary endeavour on earth. And man being the highest point so far reached by her in her upward drive she is preparing him for that consummation. "The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we say, rather, to manifest God?"<sup>3</sup> That is why there is always in man the urge towards perfection, the urge to exceed himself, which is a force in him derived from the Will of the Divine. He seeks perfect beauty in art, perfect truth in philosophy, perfect law in science, perfect health in his day-to-day living, and, above all, his own perfection in all his spiritual endeavours. And it is the business of Nature to keep burning the fire of this quest in him and provide conditions in which he may give full play to his creative faculties the cultivation of which has helped him through the ages to grow and to increase, to widen and to expand in all the members of his being. Indeed, any true progress would have been impossible if man had not within him this impulse to search for his own perfectibility. "All man's age-long effort, his action, society, art, ethics, science, religion, all the manifold activities by which he expresses and increases his mental, vital, physical, spiritual existence, are episodes in the vast drama of this endeavour of Nature."<sup>4</sup>

Nature's purpose in human evolution is fulfilled when man is ready for emergence into superman. But Nature only prepares. It is the Parāprakriti, the divine Conscious Force, who is the ultimate Source, the supreme Fashioner of things. It is Her Light whose manifestation in man will change his imperfect nature into the perfect Nature of the Divine. Beyond this triple world of Ignorance are the worlds of Cosmic Knowledge, and beyond them again are the supernal planes of Light from where the Divine Shakti—of whom this Nature is an executive Force—creates and directs the whole system of worlds. Indeed, the Mother stands even above all these worlds bearing in Her eternal consciousness the Supreme Divine. The Supreme is manifest in Her as the everlasting Sachchidānanda and through Her in the worlds and planes which are Her immediate embodiments. In Her own mystery She stands as the Infinite Mother of the gods and projects Herself into all that forms the Great Play. All is She, because all are the parcel and portion of the divine Conscious-Force. This world of Ignorance and imperfection is upheld by Her and it is She who guides it to its secret aim. She is here as the Mahāshakti, seeking by Her creative Light to build in the nescience of Matter a godlike Life,—the flowering of the life, soul and mind in matter into the infinity of the Spirit. She works through Her Powers and Personalities.

<sup>3</sup> *The Life Divine*, I, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 597.



governing and leading the lines of development for their forces so that the world may progress towards its goal. But also She prepares and shapes things of the earth "that She may manifest in the physical world and in the disguise of the human consciousness some ray of Her power and quality and presence. All the scenes of the earth-play have been like a drama arranged and planned and staged by Her with the cosmic Gods for Her assistants and Herself as a veiled actor."<sup>5</sup> And it is always Her aim in this earth to create a new world of harmony and perfection and evolve out of the mental man the supramental being.

This is the way in which the Divine who has descended into the material consciousness recovers in it His own splendour in man transformed and perfected by the luminous dynamism of His own Force. Whatever might the humanist say about the unsurpassable glory of man, however emphatic might the rationalist be about the absolute value of human reason, a deeper knowledge proves to the intuition of man that the real player in the world-drama is the divine Shakti Herself—She alone is the play, the player and the playground. All are Her forms which She creates, develops and leads to their highest efflorescence. And man being Her chosen vehicle for a greater manifestation She works in him through Nature that he may wake up from his sleep in the Ignorance and open to Her Influence, to Her Presence and Power in him, and thereby grow into his perfection—the blossoming of his inherent divinity. For, if man is God self-involved and progressively self-evolving in form, the conclusion becomes inevitable that his perfection and fulfilment can be nothing short of a full emergence of that Godhead in him. And it is only the power of the divine Shakti, not any human endeavour or *tapasyā* that can effectuate this consummation in man. Indeed, She alone "can rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda"<sup>6</sup>—the most perfect of things into which man in his life, mind and body, is destined to be newborn. This is the meaning of the Supreme's earthly adventure, the meaning also of man's journey on earth.

The divine Conscious Force is infinite in Her powers and personalities. But it is in Her four great Aspects<sup>7</sup> that She is manifest in the earth-consciousness for the accomplishment of Her immediate purpose in it. The first is her aspect of calm wideness and comprehending wisdom, which in man is the inspiration behind all his spiritual enterprises, the works of majesty and greatness. The second

<sup>5</sup> Sri Aurobindo in *The Mother*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>6</sup> *The Mother*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>7</sup> Maheshwari, Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsaraswatī, as described in *The Mother*, pp. 48-50.

is of power and passion and force, which exhibits itself in the dynamic and heroic activities of man. The third is of beauty and harmony and rhythm, which in man is his aesthetic impulse that seeks to make the earth an abode of the Beautiful. The fourth is of practical knowledge and flawless work and exact perfection, from which come science, craft and technique of things for the perfect organisation of all kinds. These powers by their insistent pressure from above have not only helped the growth of man, the mental being, but they have also been sometimes sought after by him and admitted into himself and assimilated in proportion to his developing capacity. Because they are also within him—latent, involved and steadily pressing for evolution—man feels a natural impulse, an irrepressible yearning for their discovery and possession. And in epochs of resurgent creativity he has at times broken beyond the normal confines of his mind and created right out of the very heart of his experience of them. Indeed, his art and literature, mysticism and spirituality, religion and philosophy, science and politics are but expressions, plenary or partial, of these powers to which he has ever turned, consciously or unconsciously, at all stages of his evolution. The progress of man is the progress of his evolving Spirit which is effected through his culture, the outcome of his cultivation of these powers of the divine Shakti. And it is for history to study this progress and portray the rise and growth of the nations and peoples of the world, unravelling the various ways in which they incarnate and give form to these powers, and thereby prepare for a greater destiny in the future.

## VI

The historian has been a realist concerned mainly with facts and events that constitute the cultural life of humanity, and his work has resulted in the integration of the objective elements in history which constitute the foundation of all historical undertakings. He has also been an idealist, roaming in the world of thought which has given him the vision of freedom and unity, and in the light of this vision he has tried to reconstruct history, though still on the basis of the objective realities, demonstrating the essential oneness of the various creative activities of man, by which, as the truth of it becomes more and more evident to him, the diverse factions of the race would be forged into a homogeneous whole. The history of man has been and is still being written from the standpoint of this cultural synthesis, however inchoate in form it may appear to be; but where are the ideals of unity and freedom it inculcated? And all its golden dreams have remained dreams as ever. Nevertheless, ideals are not chimeras: they are potential realities and they have in them a truth which the

race is certain to realise, but only when a radical transformation of man's nature is effected by his ascent into a higher than mental consciousness wherein alone peace, freedom and unity take their perfect forms. It is to this inevitable destiny of his that man is being led by Nature as an evolutionary necessity. The great epochs of history, its golden periods, are the decisive stages through which this march of man has been accelerated. Even periods of decline and darkness with all their chaos and conflict have not inconsiderably helped forward the growth of man towards that many-sided achievement. To attain this consummation it was necessary that man should reach the very summit of his earthly possibilities by developing to their utmost all the powers that lie dormant in him. And when he himself does not do so and gives way to sloth, Nature shakes him into a new start. Thus, when life stagnates, progress is clogged, and there is no new going-forth, war becomes a necessity to open for man fresh channels of self-expression—war at once on subjective and objective planes of existence. Many of such blood-baths result in the regeneration and remoulding of the old and effete human material, even as the arts of peace exalt and increase the cultural content of the national being. The aim in history will be to discover how in every one of her workings in man through the ages Nature has been seeking to accomplish her evolutionary purpose. And in order to be able to do that successfully the historian must have an integral vision of the whole plan and working of Nature as well as of that ultimate end towards which she is inevitably advancing.

Objective history has tried to answer the question, "What are the contents of history?" Subjective history's attempt has been to trace how they come into being and what they lead to. The turn has now come for the student of the Spirit in history to explain the why of them by bringing out their inner implications. The historian has therefore to be a seer. He must have an intuitive insight into the very green-room of the human drama where Nature initiates those movements that make the pageant of history. But beyond Nature he will have also to go, into the world of basic forces, of fundamental realities, into the flaming heart of things where all actualities are born and take their first shape. It is into a vision of this world of the Mother that the seer-historian must first rise, and illumined by its Truth, he will proceed to his task of reconstructing the history of man in which he will describe how Nature fulfils the Will of the supreme Shakti in the terrestrial evolution, what are her manifold steps and how does she take them in order to prepare the earth for the Mother to manifest in it the Light of the Supermind, and evolve the gnostic being. The creative activities of man—so many milestones in his onward march—will be for the historian to assess as the expression of Nature's striving in man to cultivate and refine; to

exalt and elevate the various parts of his being, so that they might be plastic enough to the Influence of the Mother and thereby change into their divine counterparts.

When his physical being became sufficiently developed through the strenuous exertions into which man was forced by the unavoidable conditions of the primitive phase of his life, his vital began to reinforce the efforts that he made to enlarge the sphere of his actions and interests, economic, social and political. The higher vital in him growing through his creative action has been always behind those activities of the mind which produce all that is of value in his culture. Mind, however, is the most cultivated of the planes in man; and nearly every one of his cultural endeavours has contributed to its growth which is so important to his evolution. It is remarkable that his quest of truth is almost coeval with his civilised existence. Thus, religion, occultism, mysticism and spirituality have through the ages helped in the emergence of the spiritual man. The moral content in religion as well as other mental and moral discipline has promoted the growth of his ethical being. His art, music and poetry have in their pure forms brought down light from the deeper reaches of the consciousness and by it refined and enriched his aesthetic and emotional being. His philosophy and science have increased the light of reason in him, the latter giving to his mind the power of precise observation and masterful manipulation of matter. It is not that this process has gone on uniformly throughout the ages. There have been aberrations, deviations into wrong paths and retrogressions as well, when the race forsook the ideal and ran after lower pleasures and ceased to create things that could tend to further its collective well-being. The historian here will show this aspect of the process with its inner cause or causes no less vividly than the bright one which he will depict, illustrating how man's co-operation with Nature has always resulted in the advancement of his culture, and therefore, in his progress towards the goal.

It is true that the past dawns of human culture were the dawns of real glory and greatness, but it is also true that a blazing noontide waits for the advancing man in the near future. "A great past must be followed by a greater future."<sup>\*</sup> For, if the morning shows the day, the splendid mornings of the past are a sufficient promise of the ambient warmth and illumination of the coming day. Man, as he grows, resumes and integrates all his past and moves forward creating the greatness of the future.

Progress, therefore, is the whole drift and purport of human evolution; and it is to a delineation of this spiral progress and to a discovery of its hidden springs and pregnant, prophetic significances—to a reading of what has been and a revealing of what will be—that

\* Sri Aurobindo in a letter to a disciple.

history should apply itself with the integrality of its subjective and objective resources.

## VII

The historic development of mankind is too complex a phenomenon to allow of any clear division into separate periods which may be presented against a common background. That history is fundamentally the working out of a 'predetermined Plan' or a 'creative Idea' is even more difficult to discover in what externally the epochs in it are to the student of human affairs. But a deeper view of things vouchsafed to the seers reads in history a purposive process through which man is led from age to age so that he may realise the summit of his possibilities individually as well as collectively. History reflects the integral vision when it studies all the endeavours and achievements of man as a manifold organic progression; and the vision finds its wider meaning in history when the latter depicts the story of how man as a race moves forward in his chequered march to that goal. A perfect order of collective spiritual living is the hidden aim intended in the evolution of humanity. Perfection of the individual fulfils itself in the coming into being of a perfect community. The core of all human progress is an inner preparation of man for that great end of his social existence. Sri Aurobindo sees in the story of this progress several broad stages\* through which man passes in order to arrive at the highest point of his evolution on earth.

The first of these is the symbolic stage which began in India when the earliest and the most luminous of the spiritual dawns lit up its immortal fires in the intuitive horizon of the Rishis who saw in them the infinite splendours of the Supreme and that supernal Light of His which was to come down on earth and newcreate man into a divine perfection, or rather to manifest the divinity that is already there in him, because that is his inevitable destiny of which Nature in him is in constant travail. It is to these early fathers of Knowledge that the race is indebted for the profoundest truth-visions that have ever come to any mortal. The various cults of India, all her social and religious institutions are significant symbols of the eternal verities seen by the ancient mystics. An entire self-giving to the Godhead for the manifestation of His power in the human aspirant is the central discipline of the Veda. This is symbolised in the cult of sacrifice which governed the whole society, all its hours and moments. Similarly, the gods in the Veda figure, each of them, a power of the

\* Sri Aurobindo takes up these stages as the basis of a most illuminating discussion on the Psychology of Social Development in the *Arya* (Vols. III & IV). A bare outline of them in their historical setting is attempted here.

Godhead. The worship of so many deities—facets of the One—has its origin in the Vedic pantheon. In the same way, the system of caste and the fourfold motive of life are institutional expressions of truths about man and his higher possibilities, which in their essence were first revealed in the Veda, rightly called the very bedrock of Indian civilisation. Spiritually, these institutions, when living, did exert subtle influences on their adherents helping them to grow in their inner life. Socially, they united the race into common endeavours to live up to the ideals set forth in them. And culturally, they provided scope for the development of the various faculties of man, particularly those of his mind and heart. This growth and fruition of the mind and heart, it may be incidentally mentioned, is an evolutionary necessity, and it has not always and everywhere been a straight upward movement: it has had its inevitable periods of decline when the growth was effected through the fulfilment of their downward inclinations which fundamentally described a curve of descent in a circle of progress. Neither is it that man has always taken the right path. His deviations have been largely responsible for his journey being unnecessarily long and at times so very arduous. Whatever that may be, the fact is there that each phase of the symbolic stage and that of the later ones used for its characteristic self-expression a special faculty of the human consciousness developed during the period of that stage. We may classify them by saying that it was intuition that gave its stamp to the Vedic age, the intuitive mind to the Upanishadic, and the ratiocinative mind to the period of the Dharma Shastras when the social institutions were given their final forms and attempts were made to explain things in terms of reason.

The symbolic stage and the subsequent ones did not, however, arrive at the same time everywhere; neither was the Ideal seen by all the countries in the same way. This stage in China was represented by her greatest Classic, called the *I-Ching*, or the "Book of Changes", dated a little earlier than the first millennium B.C., which contains mystic trigrams about the oneness of heaven and earth in a universal rhythm, called *Tao*, the heavenly Way. According to it, man becomes truly himself when he realises his harmony with heaven. About six centuries later, the great mystic Lao-tze reaffirmed the same truth in his idea of 'Cosmic Unity in the Universal Mother'. The *I-Ching* is to China what the Veda is to India. To it China traces the origin of all her mysticism and thought. And it was mainly her intuitive mind that was at work during that age. Her great sage Confucius called himself 'a transmitter of the wisdom of the *I-Ching*'. Taoism occupies a very important place in the early thought of China out of which her culture has evolved. As a creed it symbolises for the race the truths about the perfectibility of man that came to her mystics

millenniums ago. Many of her higher endeavours were inspired by it. To the Chinese the 'Ways of the Ancients' are always the best, since they aim at the 'Perfect Man', the 'Higher Man'. Out of these grew their ancestor-worship which has been religiously followed by the whole people from time immemorial as the symbol of their traditional belief in the spirit of the past, that is to say, in the 'Ways' discovered by the pioneers of the race and handed down from generation to generation for its collective well-being. In this common instinct of the people to adore their forbears lies the secret of China's national solidarity.

The esoteric doctrines of the early Egyptians made a near approach to the symbolic stage, and in Greece it was echoed by her fathers of knowledge who founded the mystic rites of Orpheus and the secret initiation of Eleusis, both of which are said to have influenced the numbers and figures of Pythagoras and Plato. The Greek thinkers expressed in these symbols their ideas of perfection which they conceived with the help of their disciplined intellect. The age of symbols is indeed a glorious phase of human adventure; and its history has yet to be written showing how as a result of their incomparable spiritual enterprises the ancients had the vision of the Ideal and evolved those institutions through which man was to prepare himself for the great future when the Ideal would become real in his individual and collective life. The symbolic is an age not only of great beginnings but also of wise path-finding.

The later days of the symbolic stage are marked by a tendency to the interpretation of the ideals and institutions of the past from a philosophical and ethical standpoint. Through the increasing growth of this tendency the age of symbols merges into the typical phase of human history, represented in India mainly by the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The age of the Ramayana was the flowering of moral idealism, of the ethical mind; and the age of the Mahabharata, that of a puissant intellectualism, of the intellectual mind: but both were inspired by the Godward bent of India's soul. Buddhism later built on almost the same ideology was another notable effort to cultivate the ethical side of human nature. The call of the Divine upon the Aryan man, rung in the trumpet-notes of the Gita, was the greatest social ideal of the age. To see God and to see Him in one's self is not the only aim. To be perfectly equal to all beings and to see and feel them as one with oneself and one with the divine; to feel all in oneself and all in God; to feel God in all and oneself in all—this was then, as it now is, the true aim of the spiritual seeker. In China the typical phase was that glorious age which was heralded by Confucius who gave a clear and bold definition to the ideals of life and conduct and laid down the foundation of her social and collective life. It was this great sage who preached the message of

*Jen*, or universal love, and propounded the doctrine that in order to live one must let others live, in order to develop one must let others develop. Both China and India are at one in their conviction that there can be no freedom for the world so long as a single soul remains in bondage. The Buddha turned back from the threshold of Nirvāṇa and took the vow never to cross it so long as a single being would remain subject to sorrow and ignorance. Greater social ideals have never been before any other country of the world. History must tell the story of how China and India tried to live up to these ideals and how by their effort to do so they built up for all time a marvellous spiritual unity which is a unique social phenomenon in the history of mankind. Even in their political thinking both of these peoples, as already stated, were guided by their high religious idealism. The early Christians of Europe made an attempt to uphold the moral ideals of Christianity but nothing definite came out of it, because Europe was prone more towards the old Greco-Roman mentality than towards any religio-ethical adaptation of Hebraic traditions. Besides, the spiritual elements in the teachings of Christ were not fully understood by their exponents. And the mystics who had glimpses of the truth have scarcely been an influence in the life of the people.

In the typical age itself it was the outer institutions and traditions that began to be given more importance than their original spirit and intention, although the idea of their being a cohesive force in the collective advancement of the race emerged clearer than before. When this tendency grew stronger the typical phase passed into the next age of convention during which everything in society was regarded as a sacrament and therefore, inviolable. Attempts were made to fix everything into a system, to stereotype religion, to bind education down to tradition, and to subject thought to infallible authority. And the result of it was that the whole social system became petrified into particular forms and structures which admitted of no renovation, no readjustment to changing conditions in the external life of the people. The custodians of the society made it their sole business to preserve those forms and to that end, to interpret the texts in their own way. The ordinance of Manu, the code of Confucius, the injunctions of the Pope, were held as supreme and sacrosanct and that too not for what they were worth in their spirit but only for the very letter of them. The claim of capacity was gradually replaced by that of birth in the determination of caste, and the religious life lapsed into a soulless formalism having lost touch with its spiritual foundations. The four *āśramas*, or motives of life, existed merely as a mechanical routine, instead of as necessary aims to be fulfilled for the all-round development of man. The worship of ancestors took the form of family exaltation. And much worse things happened in Europe in the name of religion. Yet.



inspite of all these rigidities, the conventional stage in India, China and Europe was marked by long periods of great cultural revivals that proved the immense vitality and wonderful creative energy with which Nature had endowed these countries so that they might be able to live fruitfully and advance steadily towards their future destiny. Another saving aspect of this stage was that in its effort to preserve the shell it helped in a way to preserve the kernel too. Thus, beneath all excrescences there was always the shining core of the ancient vision, though for a time hidden from the human view.

The conventional is a remarkable phase in the historic evolution of India. It is the longest and culturally the most creative epoch in Indian history. A period of over a thousand years of it is known as the classical age when the highest point was reached during the time of the Guptas which witnessed a most brilliant outburst of the literary and artistic genius of the race, almost incomparable in history. After going through the experiences necessary for a greater rebirth India evinced all through this period ample signs of preparedness for a renewal of her life. But it could not then come about as the true significance of the ancient Ideal was not reaffirmed and the people had already opened themselves to the reactionary forces of decline. Nevertheless, the conventional mind of India during this period was largely responsible for the protection of her religion and society from disintegration and through them of all the past achievements of the race, and that at a time when they were being interpreted in a dry formalistic way. Almost the same thing happened in China. An exclusive regard for everything of the past was then the dominant tendency of the Chinese mind. This conservative attitude is ingrained in all Eastern peoples. As in India, so also in China, elaboration of formulas out of the ancient teachings was during this period the main activity in the world of thought. But in art and poetry China rose to classical excellence when the T'ang and the Sung dynasties were ruling over the country. The conventional stage in Europe was the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance—not the Reformation, for reasons already stated,—was the zenith of its cultural expression. The Renaissance opened before Europe the treasures of the Greek learning, the study of which did on the one hand rouse her interest in the beauty of life and nature, so gloriously articulated in the arts and letters of the period, and on the other, kindled in her a spirit of enquiry and research, the spirit of a rational approach to things, that was to break into a passion for truth, a demand for reason in the age that followed. It is because of this that the Renaissance is often called the inaugurator of the modern age. Indeed, all later upheavals in Europe, religious, social and political, are in a deeper sense different expressions of the spirit that took its birth in Italy in the fourteenth century when Perrarch was writing his odes and sonnets.

The age of convention had other aspects that deserve mention as having had importance to the historic evolution of humanity. Generally, it gave the conventional and conservative mind of man its round of experiences, but during its epochs of revival his creative and aesthetic mind also received its growth and fruition. And its finest works of art showed man's openness to higher levels of consciousness, and that in a manner which has no parallel in the whole history of art. It was the light of the Spirit that glimmered in them, waiting for its hour to reveal itself fully in the cultural expressions of a perfected future humanity. Indeed, it was the same light which has always been there in every true creation of man bearing witness to Nature's endeavour to sustain the various forms of culture till they attain their highest excellence in a greater future.

The last days of the conventional stage however present a dismal picture in human history. There was the society, perhaps more defined in its aims than before, but it was so much hedged in by irrational rules and cramping restrictions that it could not function as a living organism. There was also the larger collectivity, better organised than before, but its real being had yet to develop to be a governing force in all its activities. The religious life was choked with the fungus growth of blind practices, meaningless dogmas and superstitious beliefs. And the intellect was forced to engage in empty logomachies for the defence of those unwholesome accretions. These are not certainly the conditions in which any progress is possible, or any new going-forth. The only way out was the liberation of the mind from its subjection to the dead or dying forms of the past and to the prevalent reactionary forces. The key of knowledge had to be repossessed with which to unlock the door of the future. Nature, therefore, called upon the individual, the individual who is always the pioneer and precursor. It was a call upon him to shake off all slavery to the past, to steer clear of the chaotic ferment of the present and to rise up in his own strength and right and freedom to know and to master, to conquer and to create. The first response to this is witnessed in the revolt of Reason against the absurdities so much rampant everywhere in the name of religion and learning. The awakening individual began to feel that the widespread rule of those degrading tendencies must be overthrown, all old notions must be shattered, and that the barriers—the walls of unreason—that thwarted the free development of man must be broken down: and man must go in for 'fresh fields and pastures new'. Thus began the age of individualism whose culmination was the triumphal progress of physical Science. Man denied everything that would not satisfy the evidence of the senses. He questioned the validity of things that would not stand the test of reason. He ventured into the unexplored. He set out for the unknown. And to all these he was impelled by

a search for knowledge, a quest for truth, that gave the individualistic age its real sense as a necessary phase in the historic evolution of mankind.

The achievements that crowned these mighty efforts of Europe where the age had taken its birth,—since she was a more suitable field for that than conservative Asia,—proclaimed her conquest of matter, her mastery over the potencies of universal Force, that brought to man a rich harvest of new knowledge—the knowledge of the physical, of the external order of things—through which his materialistic and scientific mind had its growth and fruition and his earthward desires their satisfaction, if there could be anything like that for them. But is it not only a going to the one extreme of things? And the other extreme, we know, is the knowledge of the supra-physical pursued and attained by the East, by India in particular where in later times an exclusive emphasis on it led to a recoil from life, a refusal of its values, which slowed down the *tempo* of her progress for many centuries. If Europe accepted nothing but life and matter as the only truth and denied everything else, even God, India rejected everything, even life and accepted nothing but God. The truth as revealed to the vision of ancient India was that matter and life are as much real as God. Matter is verily the body of the Spirit, and life the expression of its energy, and in their harmony lies the true meaning of things. Yet the value of critical and rationalistic attitude that Science developed in man can never be overestimated. It is because of his insistence on reason that man is becoming more and more free from his infrarational instincts, impulses, rash fervours, crude beliefs and blind prejudgment, and that he is today nearer 'the full unveiling of a greater inner luminary'. Science is indeed "a right knowledge, in the end only of processes, but still the knowledge of processes too is part of a total wisdom and essential to a wide and clear approach towards the deeper Truth behind".<sup>10</sup> That Science has already begun to open to a higher order of things is evident from the views of many of its eminent votaries that scientific discoveries have always behind them some kind of intuitional experience and that beyond the world of sense-perception there exist other worlds of 'Thought' or 'Ideas' which are no less real than the former. Thus Science which ushered in materialism seems itself to be preparing for the latter's exit from the human drama.

The age of individualism carries in it the promise of the next age of subjectivism. Nay, it even suggests the latter and passes through phases in which the two become indistinguishable. When his Science makes man conscious of his latent capacities the cultivation of which brings to him the knowledge of the external world, he feels an urge to know what he himself is. As this seeking grows, man

<sup>10</sup> Sri Aurobindo in "Evolution", p. 29.

begins to turn inward and glimpse, however dimly, the truth and law of his being to which, he finds, he could relate the truth and law of the cosmic process, a rough mental picture of which being already there before him presented by physical Science. But a clearer conception of these things, of the secrets and profundities of the soul in man and the soul in the world is beyond the ken of intellectual reason. "Knowledge waits seated beyond mind and intellectual reasoning, throned in the luminous vast of illimitable self-vision".<sup>11</sup> Rationalism has had its day and it was also a necessity in the mental evolution of man. It has guided him so far, illumining his path with whatever light it was capable of. But any further help reason seems unable to give him. What man needs now is intuitional knowledge, a deeper self-awareness, for which he must develop higher than mental faculties. The awakening individual therefore begins to betray his subjective inclinations. He must know and be in complete possession of all the powers and possibilities that lie hidden in him. And he must have scope enough for that in life. So he demands utmost freedom for his growth and widest opportunities of self-development. New ideas begin to stir him to new activities, and the result is a remarkable advance in art, literature, education and thought, every one of which attests the trend of a mind more and more waking into the intrinsic meaning of things.

Like individuals, peoples also gradually begin to discover their own selves, their own genius and possibilities. And this newfound consciousness incarnates itself in the nation which bids fair to be the living embodiment of the collective aspirations of human groups. The communal soul of humanity seems to be awakening. But the nature of these groups is not everywhere the same. An excessive stress on the equal right of man to satisfy his physical needs leads some of them into those dark recesses of a stark ravenous materiality where they are caught in the toils of lower undivine forces. In one of them at least, as it appears, the ego of life has got so much enmeshed in the tangle of matter that it regards man as nothing more than a human animal. In another, it is the ego of mind that has combined with the ego of life only to become the instrument of a dangerous evil. And both are responsible for the rise of that dictatorial totalitarianism which threatens to destroy all superior values of life, all prospects of further advancement of the race, since the individual in it has no separate entity and, therefore, no freedom to express his higher self. And in the collectivities elsewhere the vestiges of their egoistic aggrandisement linger in the forms—though much weakened—of 'earth-hunger, gold-hunger and commodity-hunger'. To save the world from the disastrous consequences of these and other aberrations of the groups, Nature rouses in the progressive nations the democratic

<sup>11</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 183.

impulse and reaffirms to them the ideals of peace, freedom and unity. Indeed, these ideals have been always there before man inspiring his onward march, and accentuated at critical times by the pioneers of the race or by world-shaking cataclysms, but never before so much as after the War of 1914, and in the present time itself when a yet worse crisis mankind is passing through. And these ideals are certainly not those that exist only in the imagination of man. Today they are much clearer in his vision than at any time in history. And there are signs that Nature insists on their acceptance by man as the governing principles of his collective life. Whatever the politicians might say or do, the race has begun to be moved into an earnest aspiration for a life of permanent peace and freedom. That is how nations and peoples are called by Nature to wake up and prepare and be ready for a greater future.

The world-wide influence of European culture is a phenomenon as unique as it was inevitable. Never in history has the whole of the civilised mankind had such a common cultural experience as it is having today through its contact with the dynamic culture of the West. And it is an experience that man everywhere must go through in order to be fit for the subjective stage that follows the individualistic. Control of matter, discipline of life, organisation and methods, enlightened reason, emancipation of mind, search for knowledge and truth, are its outstanding contribution that does help in strengthening the foundations of life on which the future has to be built. It is these again that prove to be cohesive factors in the collective life of man uniting him into a common outlook, common endeavours, and into those common corporate activities that constitute in history the movements of the human whole. Individualism always carries in it the seeds of subjectivism. And the future depends on how the latter thrives in conditions made favourable by the former. In the materialistic mind of Europe and in other countries these seeds did not sprout as easily as they did in the inward mind of Asia, particularly of India. In fact, the impact of the West had not to be a long process for enforcing in the East the beginnings of the subjective age. It served as an incentive to Japan to discover her national self, her creative genius which flowered into manifold expressions; but as she slavishly imitated the aggressive group-egoism of Europe and chose to tread in the steps of rapacious Imperialism she fell an equal victim to the forces of darkness and is today a sworn enemy of the Light. China, the Mother of the Far East, could not so easily respond to the Western influence. When, however, in recent years she came to realise the elements of truth in it, she lost no time in receiving whatever of value there was in Europe, and, impelled by it, was soon able to quicken her life into that magnificent national awakening comparable to nothing of its kind in all history. And China stands not only for

her own freedom but also for a better and happier world for the whole of mankind.

Like conservative China, India also took some time to derive the intended benefit from the European impact. But from the very moment she was on the path of self-discovery she began to strive for the resuscitation of her national genius, and the result was a resurgence of her creative soul in every sphere of her life. Her inborn spiritual impulse, thus rekindled, broke into many stupendous efforts not only to revision the truths of the past but also to bring them to bear on the life of the race for an all-round harmonious uplift. After a period of glorious striving crowned with many achievements, the vision of the highest Ideal has now come to her as also the strength to make it real on earth. The Master of the race has spoken the Word. The Light which the Rishis of old glimpsed shines now full upon him in all its supernal splendour, and the hour of its descent on earth is approaching. It is the power of this Light that will lift humanity beyond itself and newmould it into a divine perfection. Says the Master: "As there has been established on earth a mental Consciousness and Power which shapes a race of mental beings and takes up into itself all of earthly nature that is ready for the change, so now there will be established on earth a gnostic Consciousness and Power which will shape a race of gnostic spiritual beings and take up into itself all of earth-nature that is ready for this new transformation".<sup>12</sup>

Conditions in the world today do not seem to indicate the coming of such a spiritual change in the life of man, at least in the near future. But the ways of the Divine are inscrutable, and out of the worst of evils He carves an image of the supreme Good. Mystics and prophets of all climes and ages have averred that the brightest Dawns are always preceded by the darkest Nights. Indeed, the greater and nearer the Manifestation, the fiercer becomes the resistance to it by the hostile forces that have their empire already established on earth and would not part with it. It is this resistance to the descending supramental Light that has thrown the world into such gigantic conflagrations. There are other signs, too, not externally perceptible, but equally, if not more, suggestive of the conditions of the earth being ready for that Light to come down and be active in its consciousness. True, the essential nature of man has not improved in proportion to his cultural progress and that the civilisation he has built up and the control his Science has given him over the potencies of universal Force are proving beyond his limited mental capacity to utilise and manage, but it is also true that through his progress so far his mind has now reached the very summit of its normal possibilities, which was so necessary for the next evolutionary ascent of the race. Thus is the condition created for a higher power than that

<sup>12</sup> *The Life Divine*, II, p. 1028.

of the mind to descend and manifest on earth and effect a new saltus of evolution. And it is for this that man is waking up from his agelong sleep in the Ignorance, from the evil dream of an unquiet desire-driven existence, and is catching the first golden glints of a dawning glory. Large ideas, vast thoughts, wonderful visions and matchless dreams are stirring his heart and soul, and he is beginning to feel that out of the present convulsive throes a new world is at last going to be born,—a New Heaven, as it were, which evolutionary Nature has long been patiently building. But the most glorious promise of that 'divine event' is that they who would liberate man are come and are here on earth today—they who are the Leaders of the Way, the Bringers of the Light.

The subjective period of humanity is marked by a definite tendency towards 'inner seeking and thinking, new attempts at mystic experience, groping after the inner meaning of things, a reawakening to some sense of the truth and power of the spirit'. As this tendency deepens in man his vision becomes larger and larger opening him to the secret aim of his life on earth as well as to the truth that he would attain his highest spiritual perfection—for that is God's intention in him—only when, with the descent into him of the Light from above, he rises into the supramental consciousness which alone can effectuate a total conversion of his present imperfect nature into the perfect Nature of the Divine. Thus emerges the superman, and man having completed the human cycle enters upon the new cycle of a divine living. A greater age of the Spirit dawns on earth. It is not that the whole race will be raised at once and *en bloc* to the supramental level. The individuals ready for it will first attain to it and form the nucleus of the gnostic community, the earnest of the perfect race of the future. Founded in the Knowledge of the Truth, the gnostic being will be one in the Spirit, one in the consciousness of the Supreme Shakti, and will live and act in Peace, Freedom and Unity that are for ever. This is how man fulfils his highest individual and collective destiny and how a spiritual, a perfect Society comes into being.

History finds its deepest and widest meaning when its writing is guided by the vision of how man as a race grows towards that heavenly Light which is the eternal abode of his spiritual existence. To trace this chequered march of man through the ages, outlined above mainly from the standpoint of his social development, will be the great task of the historian, to discharge which in the best way he will have, among other things, to unravel the inmost significance of the cultural movements of each of the epochs, showing from a larger view how all of them converge towards the one goal,—attainment by man of a Godlike life. Not only that, he will have also to show that every one of man's activities has been a step forward to the same end.

His art and science, his religion and philosophy, his mysticism and spirituality, his dreams and visions, his aims and aspirations, his society and politics, his trials and sufferings, his struggles and failures, no less than his peace and happiness, his victories and triumphs—all these are but kaleidoscopic scenes in the wonderful drama of man ; and all reveal in the last analysis the one evolutionary intention of the Supreme Shakti who indeed is the real veiled Player in them, upbearing and directing the labour of man towards his divine perfection. When the historian becomes the exponent of this grand spiritual integration of humanity, the interpreter of its triumphal progress towards Unity and Harmony, towards the termless luminous bliss of an infinite and immortal Perfection, he not only extends to their utmost the frontiers of his own province but also achieves the consummate greatness of his function. Croce said that history should be written only by philosophers, because 'they will look at things in the large'. We may add that history should be written by the seers who command an integral vision of the cosmic existence and its aeonic evolution. And what is this cosmic evolution but a progressive self-revelation of Sachchidānanda?



# Education and Yoga

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## I

### THE YOGIC STANDPOINT IN EDUCATION

The best modern conception of education, by a wide general agreement, accepts 'personality' as its pivotal idea. The human individual as a personality is the intrinsic value and the whole educational thought must derive its strength and sustenance from it. Modern psychological research has carried out almost a campaign of experimental investigations, which have developed into a complete branch of psychology, known as Personality and Behaviour studies. No scientific and experimental effort has been spared to analyse personality, to correlate its traits, detect attitudes, determine types, and devise innumerable methods for doing so. The sub-conscious too has been explored and the various tricky mechanism of defence reactions analysed with meticulous care. And a yet deeper depth of the sub-conscious too has been tapped and the racial unconscious made to yield certain archetypal ideas or trends of 'psychic energy' common to the race lending common characteristics to the different mythologies, the play of the children, certain types of dreams and a lot more. The whole subject constitutes undoubtedly a magnificent edifice of scientific achievement.

So far as the collection of individual facts and their presentation in tables, graphs and curves is concerned it is all very grand indeed. We feel overwhelmed by the minute details and the care bestowed upon them ; we can easily lose ourselves in them. But we cannot merely go on heaping up details about personality and never seek to systemise them into a coherent view. But as we turn to seek a view regarding the nature of personality we do not feel equally happy. The first thing we learn is that personality is no mere sum of traits or qualities of character. Personality is essentially marked by *unique-ness*. Each individual is something unique. We may discover common trends and traits in two individuals, but the one cannot be equated to the other. Either of them is unique. Our personality-studies seek to determine trends and traits, but the essential fact of personality, the quality of uniqueness, is left over to an interview for some sort of direct perception. The quality of uniqueness is sought

to be explained as being due to the individual mode of combination of a person's qualities or traits. The position of contemporary psychology involving the recognition of uniqueness in personality should indeed strike us as great, if we have not forgotten that uptil not long ago character was considered merely a sum of habits. In fact, turning to human personality for scientific investigation is itself a great advance in modern science, since man now turns round from external nature to consider the fact of his own existence.

However, the question of a complete and consistent theory of personality is a very different matter. Psychological literature surely presents quite a few serious attempts at it. Freud's '*Anatomy of Personality*' in his New Introductory Lectures presents the famous psycho-analytical theory.. The *id*, the *super-ego*, and the *ego* are, according to it, the three component factors of human personality. The *id* of the untamed and chaotic impulses, under the pressure of the *super-ego's* moral censoring, has progressively been harmonised into the structure of the *ego*. But a complete harmonisation of life is not a practical proposition and therefore the sharp opposition of the *id* and the *super-ego* is almost final to life. W. McDougall, to my mind, presents a much more coherent view of personality and in doing so he makes full use of his wide experience of normal and abnormal psychology. Perhaps he was made more in the way of seeking and achieving wide systematisations, whereas Freud was more of an undaunted original explorer of facts in new realms of the Psyche. McDougall has a clear idea of an integrated personality present to his mind. His chapter entitled 'The Integration of Personality' in *The Outline of Abnormal Psychology* clearly reveals it. The different mental disorders are due to disintegrations of different kinds and degrees. A completely integrated personality, according to him, would be one in which its numerous sentiments are all brought into a systematic relationship under a master sentiment of, say, love for truth. But how is such an integrated personality to be evolved? There is no scheme or plan as to that. In fact, McDougall goes beyond Freud, so far as their conceptions of personality go, primarily in the point of recognising the necessity of a concept of a completely integrated personality. Otherwise, in their applications they take notice of the sub-normal personality only and have sought to evolve methods for raising it to the level of average normality. Where an attempt has been made to shape education after psycho-analytical ideas, the primary attempt is to help pupils to be relieved of their existing repressions and otherwise so treat them with freedom that repressions will not be easily formed. But the freedom from repression is pursued in a relative sense, since the ideal of a completely repression-free life is not even entertained, though it is a logical corollary of psycho-analysis.

To my mind the practical pursuit of the ideals of a completely integrated personality and a repression-free life are legitimate educational consequences of the psychological theories of McDougall and Freud. They will also afford tests for those theories and yield valuable new facts for their enrichment and modification. Psycho-analysis in all its trends and tendencies yet awaits its extension so as to be able to help the average normal person to seek the ideal of perfect personality. That is as important to him as his destiny and his future.

While McDougall's attempt is profound, yet much profounder, though conceived theoretically, is the attempt of James Ward. His perception obliges him to posit a feeling and a willing 'subject' as the original active principle, which out of presentations progressively organises its experience. He cannot accept W. James's argument that for purposes of empirical psychology "the thoughts themselves may be the thinkers." The quality of being a thinker and that of being a thought are for him much too diverse to be derivable from each other. Therefore a subject of experience, which is distinct from the presentations of sensations, ideas and images is absolutely necessary. This is the 'common and permanent element' necessary to self-hood, which J. S. Mill had searched in his 'series of feelings' all in vain. This subject, however, is not to be mixed up with the soul, which is a metaphysical conception and therefore inadmissible in empirical psychology *ex hypothesi*. The hierarchy of selves between the material me, the social me and the intellectual me of W. James is changed into a treatment of outer and inner relations between the *sensitive and the appetitive self*, the *remembering and the imagining self* and the *thinking and the willing self*, with the *subject* of experience inmost to them all. McDougall finds it necessary to admit a subject, but does not keep it up, as Ward always did, for the organisation to be carried on in experience.

The lesson of these attempts at a theory of personality is most interesting. J. S. Mill earlier, working on the strict empirical principle of associationism, had slowly in his own career risen to a perception of an indispensable need of a 'common and a permanent' factor in self. Ward posited a subject for supplying the principle of activity in experience. More recent experimental studies affirm uniqueness as the essential quality of personality. McDougall in his concept of integration of personality combines the idea of subject with some more recent advances in psychology. All these considered together easily appear to be just variant statements of one and the same thing, which for that very reason becomes all the more important and challenges definition and determination.

Jung's recent book *The Integration of Personality* precipitates the question. Jung typifies in himself the spirit of explanation and yet he is an eminent empirical observer. Personality is *par excellence*

a unique fact. The more integrated is it the more is it a unique fact. The average personality works with habits and succeeds all-right with the routine type of life-situations, but when an unprecedented situation arises it crashes. A great personality, however, possesses a comprehensive command over experience and its possibilities and is, therefore, able to cope with a crisis. A great personality possesses a depth and a width in experience and inferentially it should be possible to say that the ideal personality would integrate within itself the whole realm of experience, so as to be equal to all situations, whatever their character.

Thus far it is clear. But how and wherefrom is this supreme quality of human character to be derived and does it admit of inculcation? To that Jung's answer, even as admission of ignorance, is interesting and revealing. The substance of his conclusion is that the essential fact of personality is something unknown and unknowable. In any case, he is categorical that none of the known terms of explanation, heredity, environment or any other, is adequate to explain the phenomena of personality. 'Educationally, then, the value of his conclusion is just stimulative—we must press on to know that mysterious fact of personality, since it seems to be responsible for that supreme quality of masterliness over the varying vicissitudes of life.

This psychological resumé brings us upto the best reaches of the present-day psychological knowledge and research. The upshot of it all is that an honest science of psychology finds none of the empirical terms adequate to *explain* personality and a term of speculative philosophy is otherwise inadmissible. Psychology, therefore, does not know what to do. Admission of ignorance must evidently deserve appreciation.

It is not the intention here to oblige psychology to accept a philosophical concept of soul and solve the mystery of personality. Such a solution can satisfy a prepossession and prejudice, it can afford no real satisfaction, as that does not involve an experience of any such reality. The psychological procedure of relying upon experience is absolutely the best and we shall not revert to constructive metaphysics for any resolution of a difficulty. However, the experience of psychological research and investigation itself suggests that human experience is vast with many realms and dimensions, as it were. The psychological research since the beginning of this century abundantly bears it out. Let us remember the psychology of Wundt, the addition that the Kulpe school made to it, and then remember the more recent school of behaviourism. Each creates in the life of human personality a complete field for itself and investigates it. Psycho-analysis adds in a true sense a new dimension to mind, affording room to many sub-schools to carry on investigations in that realm. For purposes of

illustrating how varied our approaches to experience can be we may also remind ourselves of the characteristic standpoint of Bergson. It is not for his philosophy that we think of him here, but for the psychological fact of an experience noticed by him. He had said: "For once try to dissociate yourself from the passing sensations and ideas and images of the stream of your consciousness and identify yourself with the stream itself: you will then experience motion as such." Now that is a bit of experience capable of verification by satisfying the conditions of it. This experience may be qualitatively of very great value. Psychology, we must plead, cannot or should not limit its sphere of experience. All new approaches must invite us, since they might help to solve our present difficulties. A psychology, wide and awake to the vast possibilities of experience, alone may hope to rise equal to its great responsibility of investigating and satisfactorily explaining human personality.

The psychological attempts at personality, we have seen, leave us with an enigma, an unknown and an unknowable  $x$  of existence. But may it not be a limitation of the approaches themselves that the real fact of personality could be indirectly felt but not known? The present writer definitely feels that the true fact of personality, so inscrutable and resistant to the methods and approaches hitherto adopted, is directly amenable to another, which is an approach of experience to experience, which tradition justifies its being called the yogic approach. Yoga, it is hardly necessary to say, is a system of psychological or psycho-physical discipline. It is not essentially wedded to any metaphysics. At any rate, it has no love for metaphysics as such. It dislikes philosophical constructions, since it demands experience of what exists. Further, traditional yoga means a vast body of knowledge involving many distinctive trends and tendencies. But the intention here is not to re-state and expound any of the historical schools of yoga, but to present an approach, which to the best experience and verification of the author, can resolve the enigma of personality, directly reveal the true fact of personality, and thereby give a radically new orientation to education and life as a whole. This approach is an approach of experience to experience and is, therefore, essentially psychological, yoga itself being to the author primarily a branch of applied psychology concerned with the perfectibility of experience and human nature.

Now let us turn to defining the exact approach we have called yogic. It may be stated at the outset that the formulation given here arises out of the author's experience of a few years' occupation with yoga as practised at the Pondicherry Asram under the guidance and help of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The yogic approach stands fundamentally rooted in the forward-lookingness or the prospective attitude of attention as a mental activity. This approach is, at the

first instance, a will for progress, improvement and a better future. This will, when it is sufficiently deep, becomes in the true sense 'aspiration' of yogic terminology. The yogic student next starts exploring and becoming conscious of the furniture and equipment of his personality. He now seeks to understand the different stimuli which evoke different kinds of responses, but fundamentally looking at the impulses which are touched and the mode and the manner of their action and expression. Thus, psychologically a hard point of discipline arises for him. While going about his work and carrying out the necessary actions of daily life he seeks to keep a vigilant inner eye upon the impulses, feelings and suggestions of ideas as they play up in his consciousness. The cultivation of this attitude is a delicate matter, since it is different from the attention-process, which is engrossed in the objective fact, like the man lost in watching the waves of G. F. Stout's illustration (*Manual of Psychology*); and also different from that, where the individual oblivious of the external fact seeks to determine his own feeling only; as in the same illustration, the watcher of the waves, when startled by the question, what are you doing? turns upon himself and says, "I was watching the waves". The two attitudes exemplified in the illustration are truly objective and subjective. But the yogic attitude we are seeking to characterise here, is different from both. Its parallel, however, we see in the psychological introspection as employed in the study of perception, for example. There the psychologist, while observing or continuing to observe an external table, seeks to study the sensations and meanings that it evokes in the mind. The yogic attitude similarly involves a constant peeping eye at the inner happenings, without becoming oblivious of the outer situation. This is, for yoga, grounded in the psychological fact that all the movements of our behaviour proceed from certain impulses of the mind. Those springs of action have, therefore, to be watched if the behaviour has to be controlled and guided. The main impulses and the feelings and suggestions of sensations and ideas which influence them are for yoga, the primary reality, the behaviour is a secondary phenomenon, an expression. Here we can also state a fundamental law of yoga, *viz.*, it is by becoming conscious that our control over ourselves increases, unconsciousness is the cause of our inability. This consciousness must progressively extend to finer and finer details in order effectively to possess and control a sphere of experience and behaviour. The whole aim of yoga could be stated as the wider and wider extension of consciousness; however, as it were, in all directions, horizontally, but more than that vertically, both upwards into the higher ranges of consciousness as also downwards into the sub-conscious and the racial unconscious.

The yogic attitude, we were seeking to delineate, is thus neither subjective nor objective; it is a certain balance of the two in which

the agent always knows himself as the doer of an action at the time the action proceeds. It takes time to develop this attitude and much more time to possess it effectively, but when developed it means that the inner consciousness becomes capable of a dual function, that of observing a fact and that of observing this 'observing'. This is a possibility for the human rational consciousness and involves a certain inversion in the trend of consciousness as evolutionally determined. Our natural gaze is outward, objective. The environment has governed organic evolution. We, therefore, look to it for safety and for danger. But the capacity of self-consciousness and its development promises to make man his own master. Becoming conscious of his impulses at the source he can govern and guide them and cease to be at the mercy of the external stimuli.

As a counter-part to the object-directed natural gaze, yoga does contemplate a state of self-engrossed consciousness. It is a consciousness in and for itself, disconnected from the external situation. This is the *samādhi* of many yogic systems, pursued as the ideal. But Sri Aurobindo regards it only as a means for achieving the right poise and balance in consciousness as a whole and at all times. In meditation, as a yogic exercise, it is usually such self-engrossed consciousness that is progressively sought to be developed. But this state must be carefully distinguished from the states of reverie or general moodiness, since they all involve an obliviousness or absent-mindedness regarding the external situation. In a reverie or a moody state as such the person is carried along a stream of ideas and feelings. He lacks self-possession or self-direction. In meditation, a poise and balance and a sense of joy constitute the basis. A relative stillness is also present. An impetuous train of ideas or images is out of the place. A sense of self-possession and self-containedness is also ordinarily present.

The yogic approach, arising out of a basic will for progress and improvement, seeks to develop in consciousness an established capacity for a dual functioning, that of remaining vigilantly conscious of one's motivations of actions as also the situation in which one acts. This consciousness of one's motives must progressively develop to finer and finer details of feelings, sentiments, dispositions and attitudes as brought into play by the varying situations of life. While thus the yogic student grows in his knowledge of himself, he will soon discover actions, the motivations of which are not on the surface of the mind for him to observe. In many kinds of behaviour of himself as of others, he will soon notice that what is proposed or attempted is not really meant. In seeking for these concealed intentions he will progressively discover a whole realm of mental existence, the sub-conscious, with its own laws of operation. One fact of the sub-

conscious working will obtrude upon his observation more readily, *viz.*, the tendency of obstinate and persistent action in defiance of or in spite of a rational guidance. The yogic student in his search for knowledge will naturally go deeper and deeper in his mental being and will also discover in connection with the sub-conscious working the value of dreams as indications of the presence of impulses influencing his thought and conduct, directly or indirectly. The vigilant self-observation and self-analysis will thus encompass his whole life, hours of work or of rest and the hours of sleep and dream or of waking.

However, in connection with the yogic attitude of becoming progressively conscious of oneself through vigilant self-examination and self-analysis it is necessary to observe one thing. We had said that yogic effort arises out of a fundamental will for progress. The self-analysis of the yogic attitude is a great deal different from the analysis of psycho-analysis. In the latter, analysis is pursued for its own sake, as it were. In the former, a self-synthesis, a will for perfection is the constant goad for self-analysis. The present author has argued elsewhere that even in psycho-analysis the cure is virtually not achieved, as professed, through analysis and the consciousness of the causes of conflict, but in fact through the incidental strengthening of the will for mental health, afforded by the relative removal of the divisions caused by conflict through an access in experience to its nature and working. If the will for mental health is the real cause of cure even in psycho-analysis then yoga is evidently very right in recognising the will for perfection as the more fundamental urge of yogic effort. This urge has, therefore, to be kept alive : as, positively, it is the energy of this urge, which progressively shapes the material of personality into a harmonious form. Aspiration, which is the deep, earnest and sincere will for perfection, is therefore the basic movement and the primary law of yoga. Sri Aurobindo is accordingly ever so insistent on aspiration. 'Aspire intensely, but without impatience'. 'All sincere aspiration has its effect'. There are any number of such sentences in his writings on yoga. The Mother's emphasis is equally forceful. While stating how one is to proceed with yoga, says she, "This is the first thing necessary—aspiration for the Divine. The next thing you have to do is to tend it, to keep it always alert and awake and living."

A scientific issue of great importance arises here. How are the two movements, that of self-analysis and of a seeking for the ideal of a synthesised personality to be balanced in an individual's yogic pursuit? Psycho-analysis leaves the synthesis to be entirely an unconscious effect, the working of which it does not even take notice of. For yoga that synthesis is a conscious process and emphasised far



above the activity of analysis. Analysis is, in fact, only a means. Psycho-analytical practice has brought to light certain dangers of analysis. One comes across cases where individuals, howsomuch they may be made to relive their past experience, do never get loosened from their identifications and fixations. The whole fact of the matter seems to be that a person achieves release from his identifications and fixations to the extent he is able to relive them in an attitude of objectivity or regard them as impersonal facts and in his judgment disown them. This rejection facilitated by the objectivity introduced into the situation by the presence of the psycho-analyst is perhaps the cause constituting the negative work that affords the release, the positive work being the incidental strengthening of the will for health as the fixation is loosened. However, this psychological process of rejection or dissociation of oneself from an experience and the judgment of disowning involved in it is not to be confused with the suppressive judgment of conscience or the super-ego. Repeated reliving of experiences in some cases simply means a further strengthening of the fixations. Analysis is, therefore, not an unqualified method. A pre-existent will for health alone can safeguard such a danger. Yoga accordingly emphasises very much more the aspiration. This emphasis on aspiration is, however, different from the toning up of the supercilious and suppressive conscience and its moral demands. It is virtually a deep attitude of love, adoration, admiration and seeking for harmony and perfection. It essentially involves a sense of wholeness. It works in the nature of spontaneous growth, assimilating materials of all kinds, harmonious or inharmonious, and shaping them into a picture of an organised wholeness. Conscience, on the other hand, works by commanding and evoking sense of guilt in case of default. The movement of aspiration recognises no sin or guilt or repentance, but only things harmonious or discordant, which may be called right or wrong movements of our nature. And where wrong movements persist yoga recognises the need for persistent aspiration and there is no more ado about them. A yogic student may not at all pursue analysis as a deliberate process, his hands being often full with what is even otherwise thrown up and reflected in consciousness to be carefully reshaped and worked into the texture of his growing personality.

The yogic approach, which we have been seeking to characterise, now admits of a fuller definition. Arising out of or standing on the basis of a fundamental will for perfection it seeks to explore and understand the workings of one's nature. It detects motives of action, conscious as well as unconscious. An effective self-observation is developed through the cultivation of what we have called the dual functioning of consciousness. Such consciousness proceeds in its work of analysis and synthesis through the conscious exercise of the yogic

processes of rejection and aspiration. Between the two, however, relying very much more on the positive, the latter.

The yogic student, as he becomes more and more conscious of the workings of his nature, finds that his mind has a habit of fastening upon particular perceptions and ideas. The so-called morbid fixations are only extreme cases of what the mind ordinarily does. It identifies itself with its experiences and the relative balance that it possesses is the best adjustment of the rival stresses and strains due to competitive fixations and attachments. Yoga, which is not satisfied with a workable economic balance among the stresses and strains of mental workings and seeks, as it were, an absolute balance and true perspective for each experience, proceeds by rejecting each identification with a sight, or touch or taste or even an idea or opinion and persistently aspires for a perfected balance with no tiltings of any kind or degree. And when such identifications have been greatly weakened in the waking hours and the individual is able to experience things without the interference of personal likes and dislikes, as it were, from the mid-air, he has still to pursue those identifications in his dreams.

The fixations in regard to a certain type of gratifications will yet reveal themselves in the dreams and thus offer further opportunities for rejection and aspiration to work on them. The yogic student intent on a complete integration of his personality will not permit any island-like formations of individual impulsions to linger on in any part of it. He thus labours on, day and night, year in and year out, in and through his ordinary work and employment, rejecting the wrong movements of his nature and aspiring for the right ones in their place. But this labour is by no means a painful self-sacrificing sort of activity. Progressive realisation of harmony carries with it an ever widening joy. Rightly carried out the yogic effort is essentially a movement of joy. At the earlier stages, however, when the individual is yet too settled in his objective way of looking at things he does not know and understand himself and the yogic work, therefore, appears to him a terrible enigma. Solitude is unbearable to him and he wonders what others do spending hours by themselves apparently doing nothing. The change over from the outward to the inner way of regarding life may take one a long time and that time will involve difficulties. The fault of projection, of attributing responsibility of things gone wrong to outward objects or other persons, will trouble more than anything else. It is at that stage that the patience of an individual is put to a very hard test indeed. After that perhaps the yogic activity becomes intensely joyful and the recurrence of old difficulties, which can continue very long, is, no doubt, embarrassing, but perhaps not so serious. However, the yogic student by that stage should have learnt that self-vigilance must be a constant virtue with him.

We said above that it is the nature of the mind to fasten upon particular perceptions and ideas. The meaning of the statement is that the hedonic character of our consciousness, the pleasure-pain aspect, is a necessary concomitant of our experiences. We, therefore, necessarily form likes and dislikes, whether weak or strong, as we go along in our stream of consciousness. Such likes and dislikes determine our relative fixations. They merely constitute our personal prejudices in the cognition of objects. Yoga feels only too keenly the limitation of this consciousness and, aiming at a perfect balance and true perception of objects, proceeds by rejecting each fixation and aspiring for a status of free cognising agent. It is virtually asking for the absolute. But the fact is that what looks impossible under the limitations of common ideas can before long appear from the yogic approach a definite possibility. Perseveringly, sincerely and wholeheartedly aspiring for release from particular fixations on the one hand and for a perfected wholeness on the other and discarding identification after identification with the bodily self, the instinctive and emotive self and the thinking and socio-moral self, the yogic student finds himself progressively carried over to a new realm of experience—a realm of wholeness as an established fact. Whatever be otherwise the characteristics of this experience, it leads more and more a new poise and balance to ordinary experience, one effect of which is that gratifications now cease to leave a hankering or stickingness behind. Nor do unpleasant experiences leave aversions tending to reassert themselves by a sort of habit. This experience of wholeness, which has such a transforming effect on the ordinary experiences constitutes qualitatively a new experience, virtually not a particular one experience, but an experience which is typical of a new level and plane of experience. As this level and plane of experience establishes itself progressively more and more, the individual learns to recognise himself ever so distinctly and fully *as a reality*, awake and joyful, inmost to him, and the psycho-physical apparatus of his life as its instrument. This reality is called by Sri Aurobindo the psychic centre, the soul, of our existence. With the individual awakening to this inmost fact of his personality the effects of it to his life as a whole are most extraordinary. As his experience of it grows, freedom, self-reliance, and with them a true self-hood and uniqueness grow in him.

Here is the true answer to the enigma of personality, found otherwise so baffling. The merit really goes to the new approach to experience. Aspiration is an upward urge, an urge for wholeness and perfection. Psycho-analysis, on the other hand, sought to go back and back to childhood and the racial unconsciousness. If psycho-analysis did not succeed in finding the principle of unity and wholeness in life, it should be no surprise. It relied upon analysis and sought to unravel the past vicissitudes of life and show the present in the light

of the past. Yoga is vowed to perfectibility of life and therefore determined to discover the true basis of unity in personality. As contrasted with the sub-conscious, which psycho-analysis added to psychology, yoga adds a new dimension, which we may call the super-conscious, a plane and form of consciousness lying above our present one. As the sub-conscious is the home of the untamed passions and is broadly 'chaotic', as Freud says, the super-conscious is essentially characterised by a sense of unity and wholeness. Either of them has a whole methodology and technique of its own which when followed yields verifiable results.

The place of a qualified psychoanalyst in the application or practice of Psycho-analysis, according to Freud, is indispensable. In the practice of yoga the place of the Guru-personality is even more important. Aspiration, the basic upward urge for perfection, acquires a living force largely from the concrete example of the Guru's life. The super-conscious, which is above the yogic student at the moment, is presented as a concrete reality in the Guru. Thus the Guru by his example re-inforces and strengthens the aspiration of the disciple. The Guru, to be a qualified teacher of yoga, must have pierced through the various layers of identifications and discovered the true centre of his personality. Such a Guru is capable of helping the disciple by a direct soul-action, comparable to the telepathic operation of mental life, too. However that demands a certain attitude of receptivity on the part of the disciple. The disciple, looking up to the beatific super-consciousness of the Guru, adores, loves and admires him. He lovingly reveres him. He opens himself to him. And the Guru is thus able to render to him a silent help, an awakened soul seeks to awaken another soul for the moment lying shrouded in layers of identifications. And as at different stages of growth special difficulties arise the disciple's aspiration and the Guru's inner help and guidance come to aid and, given proper patience, the difficulties are tided over. All other verbal and intellectual help of the Guru is additional and is perhaps of a supplementary character.

Here we have characterised a third movement of the yogic approach. Yoga is a forward-looking and upward-surging movement of human consciousness. It, therefore, rejects its moorings of attachments and identifications with the sense-given particular perceptions or mental representations of them in memory, imagination or thought with the tiltings of likes and dislikes for them and aspires for a whole wholeness, an established sense of poise and balance in and through them and also without them. The rejection is essentially of tiltedness, these very perceptions and ideas against the background of a perfectly poised consciousness being otherwise the object of aspiration. Rejection is also virtually a process preparatory to reassimilation of experience into a new synthesis. Instead of bifurcating experiences

into the opposite pair of like and dislike they are sought to be possessed in a feeling of equal regard and appreciation, each in its worthy place in a wholeness of experience.

Now a yogic student, as he starts on his venture, assumes such a perfect consciousness. He does not aspire for a mere principle, a fine judgment of thought only. The state and plane of such consciousness, then super-conscious to him, is assumed by him to be a fact of existence. His Guru's consciousness is a tangible representation and more or less reproduction of the same. That ideal consciousness possesses the totality of experience in perfect poise and balance, in which knowledge, emotion or action attain to their perfected harmony and relation. The yogic student more and more adores, admires and heartily loves the excellences of this Absolute Consciousness, the Divine or God, and seeks communion and union with it. That seeking is the way to rise to that plane of consciousness. As the student advances, dissociating himself from identification after identification, and starts getting brief contacts with the shining centre of his true self-hood, he tangibly becomes conscious of one supreme consciousness pervading all. He then starts getting into intercourse and contact with that consciousness and his yogic activity acquires a concrete base. He seeks to touch the same consciousness in the Guru too. The responsiveness of this consciousness in guidance, help and love, now concretely experienced, becomes the testimony and proof of the reality of the consciousness sought and the seeking evidently becomes in itself a living and forceful process. This Higher Consciousness is the postulate of yoga to start with, though there are yogas which proceed even without it, but later on it becomes a fact of psychological experience.

This essay on 'The Yogic Standpoint in Education' has so far done no more than achieve its first step. That first step, however, is the whole base and foundation on which the entire super-structure of educational theory and practice is to be built up. We heartily endorse modern education in recognising personality as pivotal to it, in aiming at the growth of personality as its object and ideal and through the various processes of teaching to seek to stimulate a fulfilment and enrichment of the same. However, the net result of the varied psychological attempts at unravelling personality, laudable and laborious indeed, is yet in achievement so far mainly negative. Such is indeed the state of modern scientific psychology on which education mainly relies for its practical task of shaping personalities. Education knows from psychology, at any rate, the characteristic marks of personality, *viz.*, freedom, initiative, self-reliance, responsibility etc. These it seeks to cultivate by affording suitable opportunities. So far so good. But the yogic approach to experience, which we have sought to characterise and delineate, setting it in

comparison with some other psychological approaches, has led us to perceive what we called the psychic centre, which is the soul of the common conception, as the true basis of individual's self-hood and personality. This is the yogic solution of the psychological enigma. The psycho-physical basis of mind and body, involving the functions of perception, instinct, emotion, intellection, thought and even moral consciousness and feeling, constitute an instrument. If this is true, then the principal thing in the cultivation of personality will be to activate the psychic centre and achieve a synthesis of personality governed and guided by that centre. That synthesis, yogic experience shows, is the completest and fullest synthesis of personality as a whole. Partial syntheses, with any function or member of psycho-physical apparatus as the basis, are of course possible, but they do not go far. An athlete achieves a synthesis of life of his own. A scholar his own. A yogic student, it may be affirmed, achieves the truest synthesis, since he accepts what truly is the basis of his life as the principle of his synthesis. And he achieves a true and full personality in the measure that one function does not seek to arrogate to itself the place of the whole, but the psychic centre or the soul, which is the true unity, seeks to synthesise the entire furniture and equipment of personality into a picture of unique wholeness. Under this synthesis every function will and should enjoy its proper status and place, without any perversion, exaggeration or diminution. Indeed there have been yogas, which have simply rejected the body and much that is mental and emotional. That is, however, not the aim and purpose of the system of yoga formulated and practised by Sri Aurobindo. To him the perfection of personality means the discovery and enjoyment of its true centre and under its harmonising guidance the fulness of life in each function and member of our personality. Such a personality, possessing within itself a complete synthesis, will be equal to all life and its varied vicissitudes. It will be in the true sense the great personality of Jung's conception, and there is surely now no enigmatic perplexity as to its nature and character. Next arises for us the practical question of education. How is such a harmonised personality to be cultivated? Plato had conceived the whole life of the state as an educational system and the wise men were to be the rulers of such a state. But how to ensure a regular supply of wise men was the question that baffled him. It is, indeed, a question that has not found a satisfactory answer as yet. But surely it may not be insoluble or may not remain insoluble for all times.

To this practical question of yogic education we turn in our next section.

## II

### THE INTEGRAL EDUCATION

Our previous study has prepared us to view human personality as essentially a psychic centre, soul or spirit, supporting an organisation of material body, life-impulses, the instincts and emotions, and mind. All this, however, constitutes a loose sort of organisation, since the physical body, the life-urge and memory, imagination and thought, each constitutes a relative system of its own. Further, within each one of them there are lesser unities working self-assertively or egoistically, without a sense of harmony with the rest of the personality. We saw that yogic experience reveals the whole of this loose sort of body-life-mind organisation, as depending somehow on the psychic centre or the soul. The reason of the affirmation is that when by the yogic technique the student discovers his true self-hood and begins to live there more and more, the discrepancies and mutual divergences of the empirical personality tend to disappear. Then one also feels that centre as the true principle of activity; and body, life and mind as working on delegated authority. A harmonised personality, in which the true centre has come to its own and the disagreeing members and parts of members have been brought into the scheme of a wider synthesis is thus the aim and the object of integral education. It is a growth of the personality as a whole that is aimed at rather than the embellishment or enrichment of any part of personality as such, body or intellect or emotions. The wholeness or the harmony of the whole, and not any exclusive cultivation of a faculty can be the objective. This is really the ideal of the spiritual personality that yogic education seeks to follow. The whole reference must, therefore, be constantly present, however small the particular details attended to at a time may be. A whole personality aiming at a wholeness of experience will require to perceive each part in relation to the whole. Each impulse must be felt in relation to other impulses as each object must be perceived in relation to other objects and possibly against the setting of wider and deeper spheres of existence and reality.

Educational critics sometimes object, saying, how are we to know whether a particular thing in a personality is harmonious or in-harmonious. As a rough sort of standard, the harmony ideal as involving simultaneously the growth of the physical, the intellectual and the moral aspects may work satisfactorily. This is, however, considering personality from the outside in terms of tangible effects. But personality must always be considered in itself and from within,

independent of the effects it may produce. So considered, harmony means a freedom from inner conflict and contradiction and the violence of one part over another. Positively, harmonious growth would mean the realisation in each individual of his own plan and scheme of uniqueness. Spontaneity working in an individual in an ever increasing measure is to determine what is harmonious to it. No external plan of harmony can really be imposed. Perfection of spontaneity would mean perfection of personality and the perfection of freedom and other qualities. Applied to a class, this principle will ensure that the pupils, though they no doubt progressively live and work under a plan of life and teaching based upon the general facts of growth and its stages, do never have to work under a plan too rigid, or an atmosphere too coercive. There is all the respect for an individual's personality, as though the whole atmosphere welcomed, in fact encouraged expressions of spontaneous individuality from the pupils. Such genuine spontaneity, arising out of a deeper impulse of personality shall, of course, have to be distinguished from an ordinary passing wayward impulse. Keen and constant observation will enable a teacher to recognise the one from the other and while he will show all the respect for the former, in the case of the latter he will seek to help the pupils to recognise the true character of the impulse and reject it. But the rejection may not be easily possible. He will have to permit some satisfaction of the impulse and allow them to know it from the consequences. But in extreme cases he may prevent and prohibit the satisfaction of the impulse and help his pupils later on, when they are in a psychological mood for it, to see the reasons of his behaviour.

To start with, the child is largely impulsive. He identifies himself with the rising impulse and hardly knows that he acts so often in contradictory ways. Each time an impulse arises and the child identifies himself with it, we witness a self-assertive, egoistic, self-seeking type of action. Gradually, however, as thinking develops, he becomes capable of listening to persuasion and he begins to see the contradictions of his demands. A relative kind of unity starts to develop in his character. However, this character is an organisation of the sentiments taking shape in the child's life. These sentiments are feelings of love or hate for ideals of fair play, justice, truth, goodness etc. as for individual objects or persons. These feelings regulate in a good measure the behaviour of the egoistic impulses. But they do not by themselves make a harmonious whole. We develop contradictory sentiments. Patriotism exists by the side of fear for personal life and property. It is in relation to this situation of the growth of character that McDougall affirms that a whole and a wholesome personality would harmonise its various sentiments under a master sentiment, say, of love for truth. Here McDougall does evidently



visualise the possibility of a complete harmonisation and so far the psychological position is educationally fine and hopeful. Still, if one critically examines the nature of the process of the growth of character and McDougall's own delineation of the nature of sentiment, one comes face to face with some disconcerting facts. First, that character grows out of opposed and opposing sets of self-seeking instinctive tendencies by developing opposed and opposing sentiments. These sentiments may, however, be sought to be organised under one master sentiment. Now if a sentiment is carefully examined the various impulses and instincts, which enter into its organisation, do persist to possess their self-seekingness. Under patriotism, e.g., I now feel angry when somebody reviles my country, now proud and self-assertive when she is honoured and praised and so on, variously under varying situations. The anger and the self-assertion that I feel occur in subordination to the interests of the country and they are, therefore, different from the pure and simple anger and self-assertion of the child and the savage. However, when they arise they yet have a self-seekingness in them to the extent that at the time that they arise rival considerations are lost sight of and the individual feels carried by them, though he is able to recognise this fact fully only when the emotion is past. This shows that the organisation of sentiment does not really harmonise the instincts, it simply brings them into a relative mutual adjustment. If that is the case with the sentiments, the master sentiment does no more than achieve a relative adjustment among the various sentiments of a personality. That is, however, a great step in the direction of the ideal harmonious personality. But it is yet far short of the spiritual ideal of a completely harmonised personality. Yoga aims at an effective transformation in which the egoism and self-seekingness of the individual impulses is supplanted by an established sense of unity in the entire realm of personality. Such unity is possible, yogic experience bears out, only when the individual discovers the true master principle of his personality, the soul. The mental terms, on the mental plane, by themselves can achieve a relative adjustment. Unity in personality is achievable only by rising to the plane of the spirit, the true unitary principle of our life. It is a most remarkable fact of yogic experience that as an individual progresses a most marvellous spontaneity fills his life more and more, reconciling the contradictions of the mental plane into surprising harmoniousness.

Such is the spiritual ideal of yogic education. A transformed personality, free from all blind individual self-seekings, enlightened and harmonised in every part.

How are children to be helped to grow into the picture of such a life? That is, after the definition of the aim, the more practical task of the teachers and parents.

The spiritual ideal of a completely harmonised personality is,

on the one hand, suggested by the imperfections of our present existence and, on the other, inspired by the faith regarding the reality of a perfect personality, ascertained as definite knowledge by advanced yogic experience. The absolute consciousness of that personality comprehending and unifying all experience is the highest height of consciousness and experience, which the yogic student aspires after. That consciousness, we have said, yogic experience after a stage begins to concretely feel and find responsive in an intimate manner. This consciousness is the postulate of yoga. To start with, it is an assumption, but it becomes a psychological experience at a later stage. This consciousness is the true teacher or Guru of yoga. The human Guru is his representative and in the measure that he realises in himself that Higher Consciousness, the Divine or God of common belief, does he fulfil his representative character. Sri Aurobindo's own words in this connection are highly enlightening and inspiring. Says he, "The Teacher of the integral yoga will follow as far as he may the method of the Teacher within. He will lead the disciple through the nature of the disciple. Teaching, example, influence—these are three instruments of the Guru. But the wise Teacher will not seek to impose himself or his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind ; . . . He will give a method as an aid, as an utilisable device, not as an imperative formula or a fixed routine ; . . . His whole business is to awaken the divine light and set the divine force working of which he himself is only a means and an aid . . . He is a man helping his brothers or, better still, a child leading children."

It is commonplace to characterise education as a bipolar process ; the educator and the educated, the teacher and the pupil, being its two poles. Education becomes an interplay between them. The yogic education is not exactly bipolar, since here three factors are at play. Yoga is essentially a forward-looking and an ideal-seeking view and mode of life. The ideal, however, is not an intellectual principle, but a concrete consciousness, embodying perfect knowledge, emotion and will. Evidently this ideal must loom large in the yogic scheme of education. And with this ideal will stand the human personalities, possessing it in realisation, as the human embodiments and representatives of that ideal. This is the one pole, the teacher pole of the yogic education. The other pole is the pupil-pole. The ordinary class-teacher is virtually the instrumentation between the two. He learns on one hand and teaches on the other hand. He is a learner-teacher, a pupil-teacher. And as he grows in his own personality and advances in the direction of spiritual self-hood does he become a teacher and a 'Master' in the true sense of the term.

With the characterisation of the basic terms of yogic education and their relationship we have broadly given the atmosphere in which the children under yogic education have to be helped to grow up.

This atmosphere must be evidently filled with a true love, admiration, reverence and aspiration for the Divine and His human manifestations and representatives. Here an important and a difficult practical position arises for yogic education. No doubt, an ideal, a high ideal, has the power of releasing in an individual energies which otherwise can hardly be tapped. The youth must grow up, helped and goaded by great ideals. But the difficulty of the matter is the proper balance between the demands of the idealism and the necessities of the realism of the present situation. An over-stressing of the ideal easily leads to wishful thinking and acting. A treacherous hypocrisy will then naturally creep into life. That is a great danger. Yoga is, in a way, prepared against it by its rejection of the sense of guilt or the sin-consciousness as a means for furthering growth of personality. Next, its emphasis on utter sincerity and frankness as the primary condition of the yogic growth is a safeguard. And then its attitude regarding failures and mistakes is a virtual security. We sincerely recognise and own our failures and mistakes, reject them for the future and evermore intensely and sincerely aspire for correct attitudes and behaviour in those respects.

Evidently the teacher's responsibility is heavy in integral yogic education, since these qualities are not to be taught and preached, but presented in life lived. But from the yogic point of view these responsibilities constitute the teacher's opportunities. Through them he grows himself. Each contact of life, yogically speaking, since yoga extends over the whole life, is an occasion and opportunity for the growth of the true consciousness, provided that the contact is taken in the right way.

The teacher's outlook in integral education will be a characteristic one and, since his example will visibly determine the character of the atmosphere, the importance of his attitude is obvious. It goes without saying that he must be a seeker after perfection and the spiritual fulfilment of personality. In other words, he must be a progressive aspiring personality himself and the greater the measure of his own advancement the greater will be the measure of his effectivity as a teacher. He will thus automatically demonstrate in his life the various qualities of character we considered before—sincerity, truthfulness, frankness, and others. As a personality of some degree of integration he will have appreciated the basic truth of personality that the experience, the inner consciousness and its attitudes and motivations, constitute the primary fact, the behaviour and actions and their effects are secondary and derivative. Realising and appreciating this fact, he will, while dealing with children, as he does in considering himself, always aim at the inner motives and inclinations for understanding and guiding behaviour. This gaze and outlook firmly established in him, he will feel in himself ever less the tendency to coerce and force

the children's behaviour, as he will be able, by the same fact, to guide his own growth more smoothly and effectively.

The same attitude, when practised for some length of time, will bring the teacher to a most interesting realisation—namely, that the true causes of actions, proceeding from us, lie within us, in our own attitudes and intentions. And that where actions proceed in part from us, then in part do their causes lie in us. He will thus, out of the truth of this realisation, more naturally turn to look for the causes of actions and for possibilities of changing them within himself and will not under the common mental attitude of projection ascribe responsibility of failure or defect to other persons or external objects.

The new attitude well acquired means a great spiritual advantage to the individual and incidentally invests him with great value as a teacher of yogic education. He will breathe the spirit of sincerity, honesty and simplicity. He will be a moving figure repudiating hypocrisy, since through long self-observation he must have learned to see himself straight and aright and similarly see others straight and aright. He will, therefore, understand himself correctly and that will prepare him well to understand children and their impulses under the changing vicissitudes of their growing life.

A good practical knowledge of child-nature is obviously a necessary part of a teacher's qualification. A teacher, who is a yogic student himself, is, through his self-observation, greatly prepared to understand and interpret the motives of other children or adults. However, the grown-ups often look upon children's behaviour from adult standards, their own childhood and youth they having left behind a little too much, seldom caring to look upon it once again. A direct study of child's nature and youth's ambitions is, therefore, necessary. But for that a systematic book-study of Psychology is not indispensable. What is more important is a love for child-nature and a dispassionate desire to see and understand the mind and behaviour of children as they really are.

The most central fact of the teacher's outlook, however, is the unebbing consciousness of the ideal of Perfection, of the Divine. That is the central thought of the integration of his own personality. And that is the central theme of the yogic life and yogic education. The teacher, or a yogic student seeks ever, through each of his thoughts and actions, through waking and sleeping, to offer himself to the Divine, to be united with Him. He rejects those thoughts and actions as bits of his egoistic personality, which he wishes to surrender, in the whole as in each part, to the Divine, to be transformed and reshaped by that Consciousness after Its image of perfection.

Here there are two or three fundamental yogic ideas, which need clarification. The individuality, which we seek to develop ordinarily,

is that of the egoistic personality, of relative adjustment of the numerous self-seeking propensities of our animal nature. This individuality the yogic seeks to supplant by a truly harmonised spiritual individuality. For achieving that, the human individual adores, loves, admires, offers and surrenders himself to the Divine. Thus, surrendering or offering out of love becomes the cardinal movement of yoga. The responsiveness of the Divine to this movement is a coming down of It into the human consciousness, which, as a result, experiences an ascension and the net effect for man is the transformation of his nature. This, of course, proceeds slowly and by steps.

But here is no suppression of individuality, rather a fulfilment of it. A heightening of the individuality of the ego-personality is unacceptable to yogic education, as that is not the fullest height to which the human individual can rise.

The yogic education and its entire atmosphere will accordingly breathe the spirit of love, offering, reverence and surrender. Surrender, if understood as external submission to the teacher, *guru* or God, will, no doubt, produce a sort of suppressed and tame personality. But if surrender is taken in its right meaning of the heart's seeking and love for truth and perfection, then surely surrender will prove the main lever of transformation.

There is no sufficient reverence of truth for its own sake in our educational life today. Culture generally is guided by other values. If there were present in our educational nurseries a clear recognition and an honest practice of a deep reverence for truth, our character would show a different picture: instead of rejoicing in novelty or originality we would find our greatest pleasure in the discovery and enjoyment of truth. Our so-called independent thought is really a separative movement for creating self-importance. The individualities of yogic education, on the other hand, out of the constant devotion they should bear to Truth, will be more and more fashioned after the image of its great ideal.

Growing up in the atmosphere of yogic education, children will naturally develop a joy in self-giving. This will, in fact, be the test of their growing in the spiritual direction. The ordinary egoistic personality finds and seeks pleasure in the satisfaction of its self-seeking impulses. The food-seeking impulse seeks satisfaction in getting something nice to eat. If one denies it to oneself, not, however, out of satisfaction of pride or any other impulse, but out of love for another,—a love not of the self-seeking type but disinterested *i.e.*, for its own sake—then one performs in a measure a spiritual act. Such acts progressively performed, evermore disinterestedly, lead to the emergence and the growth of the spiritual personality.

Ordinary religious education easily develops hypocrisy in life.

That is also the greatest danger in yogic life and education. A formal overinsistence on the ideal, with the dogmatism that develop so easily with it, breeds hypocritical behaviour. This tendency has always to be guarded against and the only proper safeguards to it are sincere aspiration, as a living example in the educational atmosphere, and a freedom and toleration, arising out of an understanding and appreciation of the numerous difficulties of human nature shared variously by us all. The general mutual understanding based upon an appreciation of the individual differences of each, the strong points and the weak ones, will safeguard that nobody may feel socially coerced and try to hide his faults. That each must take his own time and proceed in his own way to develop and realise his own kind of uniqueness is a fact of differential psychology. This, however, holds good within the framework of the general common truths of human nature. An understanding and appreciation of the above gives to the members of a social group a spirit of toleration that is not indifference. Such a spirit accompanied by living examples of sincere aspiring individuals is the best safeguard against the growth of false and hypocritical behaviour.

Let us here recapitulate the progress of our thought. The aim of integral education is a harmonious spiritual personality. The process of this education involves the usual bipolarity with the qualification that the omnipresent All-Consciousness, the last source and reservoir of knowledge and power, is the true Teacher. The human teacher is the instrumentation between the Divine and the pupil. The Divine as the true teacher will appear a superfluous remnant of mediæval religious education to the modern reader. This is really not so. The existence of such a Universal Consciousness is a fact on which all yogic and general spiritual experiences agree. It today gets an unexpected upport from modern science, inasmuch as energy and consciousness are supposed to be the more probable ultimate reality rather than matter as apprehended by the senses. In yogic education love of truth is no mere love for an abstract principle, but love, adoration and admiration for a concrete fact of consciousness. The human teacher in yogic education will know his own humble position and indeed consider himself only a little advanced fellow-pupil.

In humility and in a spirit of sincere seeking for truth, out of a conscious and constantly operative good-will, the teacher attempts to help his pupils. This work, being his life's offering to the Divine Master, is the whole joy of his life. The teacher thus realises his own increasing perfection through his work. He sees a complete identity of his own good and that of his pupils and looks upon the self-seeking blind impulses of his own personality as the real source of danger to his fulfilment. He is, therefore, constantly on guard against per-

mitting any immixture in aspiration for the realisation of the Divine, in himself and his pupils.

The atmosphere of a yogic-education institution will be filled with the sense of the divine perfect Master, the true fountain-head of all knowledge and power. The whole atmosphere will be permeated through and through by this sense and feeling of the ultimate goal and ideal. The teachers will seek to represent this ideal, sincerely and honestly, in the measure of their aspiration and experience of it and not falsify their life as well as those of the pupils by indulging in dogmatic professions about it. For the pupils this ideal will be, to start with, only a verified experience of the greatest Masters, but they will look forward to realising it for themselves. However, neither a belief in the existence of the Divine nor any other belief as such will be considered sufficient for the pupils, advanced or otherwise, much less for the teachers. Aspiration and a positive seeking for truth and a toleration for other people's points of view would be the necessary qualification for fitting into the atmosphere of such an institution. By the side of this centralised emphasis on the ideal, we have found it necessary to affirm a keen appreciation of the realistic situation of human nature in general, and of the facts of individual differences of each, teacher or pupil. It must be understood that each individual has a nature of his own, which he needs to develop through special contacts of life and experiences into a unique perfect personality. Such understanding will be a safeguard against the development of pretentious living and profession so easy to develop in an idealistic atmosphere.

Growing up in such an atmosphere under the guidance of such teachers, how will children tend to shape themselves? That is now the question to consider. We have already observed that they would increasingly develop in themselves the joy of self-giving or that of seeing and appreciating the good of others and the common good. They will also imbibe from their atmosphere a reverence for Truth, the Highest, the Divine. That will be the central sentiment tending to govern and integrate their experiences. The example of the teachers and the atmosphere as a whole should also encourage them in a behaviour of honesty, frankness and sincerity. Absence of fear in the atmosphere should make them courageous and enterprising.

Their progressive appreciation of the common good should inculcate in them the true relation of the individual to society. With spirituality stands associated the idea of individual salvation. For Sri Aurobindo, however, the individual is intimately woven with the society, so that the former progresses more and more as the latter, as a whole, advances; and as the society goes forward, yet higher opportunities become open to the individual. In the integral yoga the individual "has not only to conquer the forces of egoistic disorder

and falsehood in himself, but to conquer them as representatives of the same forces in the world."<sup>1</sup>

The objective towards which the whole society moves, the next higher stage in evolution, is that of super-mind. The supra-mental stage is a distinct spiritual consciousness knowing truth directly, as different from the present human rational consciousness, seeking to know truth through piecemeal collection of data, doubt, error and verification. To Sri Aurobindo the world is a progressively unfolding manifestation of the Divine. Matter, life and mind are the stages of evolution already realised. The process of cosmic evolution reaching its height in man moves forward to yet higher stages and that movement is common and general. Evidently an individual perfection cannot be a pursuable goal. Children growing up in the atmosphere and under the impact of teachers, appreciating such a view, will tend to feel more and more the co-operative character of their life's adventure and undertaking. A progressive cultivation of self-giving and the surrender attitude will afford them increasing identification with 'the whole' of the Divine.

Children under yogic education will also develop a more intimate understanding of the inner workings of human nature. They will seek to know the true causes of other people's behaviour as of their own and thus come to appreciate the impulses and the motives which goad them to actions. By learning to know these, they will also learn to manage them better. A sense of reality and the whole is also a necessary incident of their education. Their entire scheme of life, in fact, seeks to present to them each perception, thought and object against the back-ground of a total reality. This sense of the whole reality as also of human nature will naturally crystallise in each pupil in his own way as his experience grows.

There are a number of other fine qualities which children under this education will tend to develop. In their appreciation of motives of actions they will more or less learn to distinguish between a more superficial or a passing motive or impulse and a deeper motive, more lasting and widely determining for life. This appreciation is likely to encourage in them a tendency to go deeper and deeper within themselves. This tendency to go ever more inwards piercing, as it were, the outer sheaths of identifications with things, bodily, mental, moral and social, is a specific spiritual movement of consciousness, since it leads ultimately to the discovery of the psychic centre. As this sense of inwardness deepens an appreciation of inner joy independent of the stimulations of the sense is likely to appear. That will mean more equality and freedom from the tossings of the emotions. Thus will a spirit of abiding joyfulness tend to settle down in them. The spirit of display is the opposite quality in which an individual

<sup>1</sup> *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Arya, Vol. I, p. 437.



lives more on the surface, the impulse to show off itself being a superficial movement of the ordinary consciousness. Evidently the more an individual is able to dissociate himself from this impulse the more he is able to enjoy a deeper and an inner status in his consciousness.

The growth of these finer qualities, which constitute the real preparation for emergence into divine nature, will require the growing individualities to learn to wield more and more two relatively simple, but fundamental, processes of yogic practice. They are aspiration and rejection. The children, living in a suitable atmosphere, will learn with relative ease, through the experiences of daily life, how wrong movements of nature are to be rejected or dissociated from and how the right ones are to be acquired and deepened through aspiration. These processes constitute the yogic means of acquiring a new habit and that of getting rid of a bad one. But in order that this may be effective one has to keep out contrary suggestions, which constitute a very serious handicap. They virtually lead one into the opposite camp, howsoever innocently or even attractively clothed they may be. Anxious thoughts are usually of this nature. A thought like, 'Lest my friend should come to grief,' or, 'Lest I should fall ill' is an illustration in point. Such thoughts will need rejection and instead of them an aspiration, involving a real positive movement of will, to the effect that 'all will be well with my friend', or that 'I shall continue hale and hearty' will be instituted.

Reverence, love, adoration and admiration for the ideal, the Divine and His human representatives and the teachers involve a third important process of yogic practice, that of opening oneself up to truth and perfection.

Learning to wield these yogic processes more and more, the growing individual will go on building up right valuations for the various goods of life. He should learn to take up correct attitudes towards health, disease, social connections, wealth, work, rest and the like.

The various subjects and the practical skill, which the children learn, will constitute virtually the material for the exercise and cultivation of the basic qualities of character above considered.

Thus children under yogic education studying and learning to do things with their hands will grow into the shape of progressive personalities; frank, honest and sincere. Sri Aurobindo once wrote, "The children should be helped to grow up into straightforward, frank, upright, and honourable human beings ready to develop into divine nature." That gives at once the character of the growth as also the shape they will take. The divine nature is the form of the spiritual personality in contrast with ordinary human nature possessing animal propensities egoistic in organisation.

But at a stage the children may, in fact, be helped to develop a healthy egoistic personality with a marked love for truth, regard for the other's point of view and a sense for general good. Self-distinction will be a principal feature in this growth. Rivalry will naturally enter into it. The growth of an individualised character out of manifold and divergent instinctive tendencies evidently needs the employment of self-distinction and comparison with others. These are central principles of an egoistic personality. To employ them would mean to cultivate the ego deliberately. But general evolution rose to a self-conscious ego-hood in man from the animal and that was a very great advance, though man now can exceed it and rise to a spiritual personality, directly seeing its good in common good. Similarly, the child in the evolution of his individual life rises at first from an animal state of instincts and impulses to an ego-personality and from there can he grow into a spiritual personality. However this last consummation can come about more easily if while helping the ego to take shape the spiritual ideal is kept in view, so that even the ego is so harmoniously built up within itself and with others in society, that it can later easily emerge into the perfect harmony of a spiritual personality. This is exactly the meaning of educating children to be 'ready to develop into divine nature'. The ego is thus not an unqualified evil as literature on yoga and spiritual life generally presents it to be. It is in itself an advance, a great advance, in relation to a certain evolutionary stage. However, it has its own limitations and therefore it must be exceeded and transcended. Sri Aurobindo's ringing words, 'Ego was the helper, Ego is the bar' come so aptly to our mind in this connection.

The parents' and the guardians' co-operation with the teacher and the school is always needed. Otherwise widely disparate standards of life and conduct come to be presented and even forced on the child and the result is confusion and disintegration for the personality. In this kind of yogic education, where an integral personality and an integral view in general are contemplated such co-operation is obviously all the more important. At the first instance, the school must through the persons of the teachers, present a harmonious picture, --a picture in which the individual differences are felt and seen as complementary enrichments of human nature, all tending towards the realisation of the rich ideal of perfect personality. Further, the school in the organisation of its teaching and life should also reinforce and strengthen the same effect. To complete the harmoniousness of the picture the parents must then recognise it as their duty to understand and appreciate the ideology and the scheme of life under which the children are growing in the school. They should thus be able to avoid conflicts, which create unnecessary difficulties in the growth of the child. The child grows more favourably if in the beginning

he lives under relatively uniform standards of conduct. Parents not infrequently give up their faults when they keenly enough feel that their children are likely to imitate them. Thus children become the cause of much improvement in the life of their parents. Integral education will make much greater claims upon the parents' will to change themselves. However, this will all be for their own good too. There is one thing they must particularly learn to appreciate more and more. That is to recognise their proper relation to children. To the yogic way of life belongs the realisation that the Divine is the integral reality and that all belongs to It. Man under the guidance of his ordinary egoistic consciousness appropriates things to himself and enters into competitive relationship with others. The spiritual view is total and integral. Under it a thing belongs to me not in an exclusive sense, but is with me or under my charge for and on behalf of the Divine to whom it really belongs. This sense we need to develop, as parents, regarding children too. The children belong to the Divine, but are at the moment under my charge for being properly looked after. I must not treat and embellish them physically or mentally for personal display and aggrandisement; and more than that, must not foist on them my own unrealised ambitions. I should, on the contrary, help them dispassionately, to the best of my capacity with proper interest and diligence to grow up possibly in the line of the best of their own potentialities. In the school or the home this growth of the child should possibly be a movement of joy. The spirit of joy and not of ascetic discipline should fill the atmosphere of education. This constitutes a major trend of integral education. "One grows into the likeness of what one loves", is a beautiful aphoristic word of the Mother.

The general psychological experience bears out that interest leads and guides our activity. It is also true that activity in a particular direction leads to the cultivation of interest in that direction. However, such cultivation is much quicker and more effective if the individual works with an anticipation of joy rather than when he persistently suffers from pain and keeps complaining about it. Sometimes artificial goads of prizes and punishments are put up. They may serve for a while. But the essential truth to recognise is that, where children read a subject or learn an activity for the love of it, they do it best, quickest and effectively. But that is not the whole of the matter; such learning also stands them in greater serviceability for the future. The influence of motive on the learning has been a subject of much psychological investigation. The lesson of this investigation is that a learned material is largely serviceable to you for the purpose that stood for your intention and motive in learning it. The motive qualifies the subject learnt. Things learnt for an examination tend quickly to fade away after the examination. Where

joy for the thing is the stimulus learning is of the best kind. This does not mean that other goads may not be used at a time, but that, if and when used, they should be earliest replaced by the proper motive.

The yogic experience confirms and extends this principle a great deal. Our pleasures and satisfactions present various qualities among themselves. They can be arranged in a scale, pleasures arising out of the satisfaction of the bodily appetites of eating, drinking etc., at the one end and self-contained inner delight of the soul at the other. Between them will come the joy of intellectual and moral life. The child has a natural appreciation of the pleasures that arise out of the exercise and satisfaction of the various animal propensities. These propensities, to start with, operate too much self-assertively and the child, under praise and blame, learns to restrain and regulate them. The training is often painful, but it need not be so. By the consequences of his actions the child's sense of enjoyment can in itself be made to guide him. He may progressively be helped to appreciate that the good is also the beautiful. The right is also joy-giving. The child need not, therefore, necessarily,—in fact must not,—learn to live for truth out of Spartan virtue. Scaling the ladder of pleasures and joys he will surely reach the same height and without the avoidable hardship. As the child becomes capable of the joys of the mind and takes delight in exercising his memory and imagination and thinking he has already taken a step towards inwardness and got nearer to the status of self-contained delight of the soul. A sense of this inner joy as an ideal the child might possess from an earlier stage, though a proper experience of it will come to him only at its own time.

The whole education can be a fine movement of joy. The child proceeds from joy to joy ; and what might appear to another a difficult discipline will virtually be to him a pleasant venture in a new sphere of experience. Pain will then become an incident of a wrong movement, very much beyond Herbert Spencer's meaning of maladjustment with the environment, since the ideal of harmony is more comprehensive here. Pain should thus evoke an aspiration to make good a point of disharmony and there should be no unnecessary fretting, fuming and grieving about it.

Discipline evidently will receive a new orientation in yogic education in the light of the above. Obstinate insistence of impulses for an exclusive satisfaction is a general character of egoistic personality and there is bound to be ever and again difficulty on account of such impulses. Management of these impulses is the real task of culture and yoga, whether in the individual or the group. The yogic-education teacher will know that equality of his own mind in the face of such a difficulty is itself a very great contribution to

removal of the difficulty, since his anger, by exciting fear, may suppress the impulse creating the difficulty, but it can never help the child to reject the impulse and thus free himself from it. He will, therefore, at the first instance, try to do the best. That is, in perfect equality, with goodwill and aspiration awake in him, show to the child where the right of the matter lies. Next to that, in an ordinary case where the child is not much in a listening mood, allow him to learn from his own experience. The teacher, however, may later on consider the matter retrospectively and help him to come to his own judgment. In extreme cases of obstinate behaviour a prohibition, some sort of deprivation or even punishment may be resorted to. However, at the earliest opportunity the child must be helped to see and appreciate the reasons of that treatment.

Such may be broadly the form that discipline might take in this education.

This essay, as an attempt at an outline of an educational system, is bound to stretch out to some length. So far we have given the aim, the nature of the process of yogic education, the responsibilities of the teacher, the parents' co-operation, the general tendencies of character the pupil should develop, the whole education as a movement of joy, and discipline.

We must now turn to consider the more concrete problems of the subjects of study, handwork, examinations, play and the like.

The formal instruction aiming at a cultivation of the senses, the intellect, the emotions and the will can by no means be neglected in integral education, though it will not be allowed to become the whole matter of education. The general premises of this education are themselves the safeguards against that. Here the whole concept of education arises out of an integral view of personality and reality. An omnipresent Reality comprehends all life and existence. That is the ideal and the objective. All particular objects derive their ultimate meanings and validity in the setting and relation of this omnipresent Reality. The human personality, which is a relative adjustment of self-seeking propensities is also to grow into the scheme of perfect harmony in order to discover its proper place in total reality. Yogic experience bears out that an individual following a definite course of development comes at a stage to discover his true self-hood in a principle of his life, which is inmost to him, is different from body and mind, and is in nature highly conscious and essentially joyful. This self-hood when discovered and fully realised works out, more and more, a general harmonisation of the life's energies. Thus comes into being a harmonised spiritual personality, the ideal of yogic education. This ideal is virtually social, in the sense that a society of such personalities is the ultimate objective. The yogic education does not want to lower the ideal in order to be able to achieve it more

easily. It, on the other hand, knows fully well the magnitude of the task, has accordingly counted the cost and is prepared to patiently work and wait.

The concepts of the 'whole' and 'harmony' are evidently the most determining features of the Integral education. All special teaching and learning must, therefore, be in the nature of supplying details, that of filling out of a wholeness of a scheme. Undoubtedly the scheme is no rigid system. It does itself grow as filling in proceeds. But the growth and the nature is in the nature of a 'whole', vague and amorphous, becoming more and more integrated as it gets more and more differentiated and individualised in parts.

A psychological illustration showing the nature of the growth of experience will be found very helpful. An older psychology had affirmed that a child starts with discrete sensations, which he then progressively goes on adding up, as it were, and thus did his complex perception of objects and situations arise. Today it is a truism of psychology that a child starts with a vague 'whole' sort of a perception. This, as experience advances, under the dual working of subjective interest and objective intensity of stimuli, gets more and more differentiated. Alongside differentiation proceeds assimilation, which makes further differentiations possible. Thus does the original vague whole of perception get progressively enriched and develops into a complex integrated whole.

This psychological experience is a guide to all sound educational practice today. To yogic, integral education it becomes its more determining trend. The 'wholeness' idea is central to this scheme of education and it will, therefore, emphasise that the school in itself presents the picture of rich harmony, not uniformity, and then the home must be an extension of the school. Thus the school and home should present one scheme of life, where the child will have all the help of the atmosphere in shaping his impulsive nature into a self-co-ordinating and self-integrating whole of a wholesome personality. The various subjects of his study should be pursued with the widest correlations, so that they are virtually presented to the child and felt by him as one unified field of knowledge. The mutual relationship of the subjects should as often as possible be emphasised so as to show their essential and intimate unity. The handwork and play and the general social life must be also clearly recognised as belonging to the same unified scheme of life. Such should be the character of the basic scheme of this education.

This standpoint requires the pursuit of a particular trend and spirit which will make a difference in the relative valuations of the subjects and more than that in the mode of their treatment in daily lessons. Modern science, which so largely determines the spirit of our life and culture today, has grown out of an analytical method.

Analysis is the great word of our life. That involves a great emphasis on the interest and delight in dissecting, breaking-up and reducing a thing to its parts. Integral yogic education would very much more emphasise the perception and the enjoyment of the thing as a whole. Analysis will yet be there, but as a means to seeking more fully the reality of the reconstructed whole. It is not too much to say that we ordinarily miss the whole in the parts. Our specialisation has led us so far into the details as to lose touch with the whole to which the details belong. A synthetic whole first, analysis next and a resynthesised whole again, with the correct perception never lost that a whole has parts and the parts belong to a whole. Such is the clear guidance of integral education. However, there are stages and periods in a child's growth when the joy of seeing the parts becomes particularly keen. A child while learning to know the objects of his environment wants to know the parts of the objects. And then an adolescent takes a special delight in logical analysis. These natural interests must be given full play, but then their achievements should be properly integrated soon afterwards.

Evidently subjects like painting and music will have a special value for this education, since they tend to intensify the 'wholeness' or integral perception. A picture is eminently a synthetic whole and the artist is trained to look at things and views as a whole. In music the sense of a whole rhythm is the main thing. The cultivation of a sense for rhythm and harmony is evidently of great value for an education aiming at a perception of the universal rhythm and harmony.

Literature and poetry present another kind of harmony, a harmony of sound and sense. These the pupils will learn to appreciate more and more.

Arithmetic is virtually a grand system of relations among numbers, though this is seldom the point of view in teaching it. The numbers are taken ordinarily too separately and addition, subtraction, multiplication and division are all the ways of their mutual relationship. But the Pythagoreans of ancient Greece may well remind us that numbers represent the celestial harmonies most adequately.

History is a record of the progress of the life of humanity. An integral standpoint of mankind as a whole, aiming at a relative appreciation of the growth of the spirit of man as such through the numerous activities and changing adventures of cultural life, would be the more legitimate way of treating history. An understanding of causal connections among the events of history is not enough.

Modern geography is rightly the study of man's environment ; not merely of physical nature, its conditions and changes. The emphasis on man is characteristic of modern geography.

Physical sciences, which embody the spirit of analysis in the

highest degree, will need a good readaptation for our education. Nature is one organised field of existence. Now each bit of detail as it is discovered and studied should be sought to be put into its proper place in Nature as such. Thus will the pupil's knowledge of Nature progressively grow through observation of facts and by considering them in the setting of Nature as a whole.

In this system of education, aiming at a full integration of personality and a total view of reality, it appears to the author that there would be and should be present a relative bias for life as a whole, for stimulating an understanding, ever getting deeper and fuller, of human nature as such and a sense of total existence. That means that when the capacity for thought and reflection appears a conscious study of psychology and philosophy should prove a helpful aid to Integral education. However, it will be necessary to evolve for the purpose a graded course of a psychology of Integral personality, and one in philosophy stating and explaining problems of life and existence, progressively from the simple and concrete to the complex and the more abstract. A seeking and love for truth, kept alive, will be a safeguard against getting lost into the verbal formalisms of the one or the other. In philosophy this danger can particularly be great.

All pursuit of study whatever the subject, should be a progress from commonsense to knowledge. In fact, a pupil starting and following up history, geography, physics, chemistry, botany or any other subject may feel that he is mostly systematising, formulating and elaborating what he already knew. All knowledge is virtually a systematisation and elaboration of commonsense. The class-room lesson should be always a direct continuation of the outside experience of everyday life. It should draw upon that experience and finally enrich the same. The experience of the pupils is the concrete reality which must ever remain in the mind of the teacher. If the teacher has trained himself to feel and bear in mind the inner experience of his pupils, as it is today and the shape of it that has to be gradually evolved, he will never lose touch with it and become academic and book-possessed or dogmatic in his treatment of the subject.

Handwork is too much conceived as a kind of adjunct to teaching, which is considered to be the proper responsibility of the school. This gives the manual work at the least a status of inferiority. In integral education, which aims at a growth of total personality and a harmonisation of life's energies as a whole, the cultivation of the body must occupy a very important place. The idea of transformed personality involves a transformation of the body. That is a supreme idea of Sri Aurobindo's yoga, which, however, cannot be explained here. The cultivation of the body through handwork involves working for the Divine, for love, disinterestedly. Such work is worship itself and is educative for the whole personality, the emotions and will



as for the body. In fact some work is necessary since we are an embodied existence, and possess a natural bias for the body. Therefore body is a necessary and a serviceable means for the education of the total personality.

However, work to have such an effect needs to be done with proper attention and in the right spirit. An education, aiming at perfection through the progressive extension of consciousness and diminution of unconsciousness, must emphasise attention to details. That is the way an individual learns to master and wield activities effectively.

Examinations and their proper function is a subject that cannot be entirely passed by. Our education in India is today much examination-centred. The effects of it are many. The students tend to read for a relatively short period before the examination and resort to rote-work. Besides, the motivation in learning is to pass the examination and no more. Integral education, which seeks growth of personality, will attempt to make the daily work by itself effective through proper interest. That secured, examinations will virtually become superfluous. The year's written work as such will then become the evidence of the student's progress.

Examinations also intensify anxiety, though they do make some work who would otherwise perhaps not do anything. Rivalry may further come in, to complicate the attitudes. Anxiety is a disintegrating force in personality and also causes disintegration in society. Our proper aim should be to encourage each student to do his best in a situation, to look forward to a perfect performance as such, and not to doing better or worse than another. And with having done his best a student should progressively learn to be satisfied. He must not unnecessarily look right and left for comparison. He should rather compare his present with his own immediate past and consider the ideal he is approaching.

Switzerland is a country with a fine educational system. Not having to maintain armies she spends liberally on education. And it was so interesting to the present writer to observe the schools having no examination except the school terminal and that conducted by the teacher himself in the presence of the inspector. And then no prizes given to stimulate rivalry. The day-to-day work and the teacher's impression based upon the personal contact was the right basis for assessing a pupil's progress.

Our modern education is also too intellectual. The cultivation of intellect is considered the real job of education and the intellectual output the test of it. Integral education would lay much greater emphasis on the growth of will and emotions which are relatively more intimate facts of personality. An integral growth needs a hand-in-hand growth of knowledge, emotions and will. Such growth is,

however, more easily facilitated where children are able to receive a true spiritual contact, which succeeds in awakening the psychic centre directly. Such an awakening has an educational benefit of an inestimable value. But such contact is not easy to have and, therefore, a greater emphasis on the empirical growth of emotion and will must be resorted to. That should be necessary even otherwise.

The method of teaching is usually a much discussed subject in educational literature. Certain general psychological principles relating to the subject are more or less universally agreed to. The presentation of the concrete, *e.g.*, should precede that of the abstract, and of the simple that of the complex, and so on. But there have been educationists, who have evolved elaborate stages and steps that a lesson should consist of. In more recent times the freedom of the teacher in handling his material is much favoured.

We will, indeed, incline towards more freedom for the teacher. In integral education the teacher has the high status of a personality and, therefore, an external limitation goes against the spirit of the whole thing. Each lesson must virtually be a creative activity shared by the pupils with the teacher. The teacher can achieve it by living concretely in the psychological situation he finds on reaching the class and shaping his material accordingly. The character of the psychological situation will be determined not only by the mood of the class at the moment, though the mood is a factor to reckon with but more than that by the stage in the growth of the subject and that of the interest of the class concerned. Any original interest evinced by any one pupil which makes a powerful appeal to the class is also a valuable psychological factor. However, the teacher will have to distinguish between a genuine interest and a frivolous passing fancy put forward more for diversion and evasion.

We have in this essay sought to treat the varied problems and aspects of education from a particular point of view. The worth and the value of this point of view, we have tried to consider rather at length; other problems a little cursorily. To all that we must append a qualification. The yogic or spiritual or integral view of life must never deteriorate into any rigid notions and formulae about human nature and reality or truth. Both are vast and are permeated through and through by uniqueness. We must always look forward to fresh discoveries.

# Sri Aurobindo and Nikolai Hartmann

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When I was asked this year for the fourth time in succession to contribute an article to the Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual, I was at first at a loss to find a suitable subject for this task. But then I felt that the same considerations which moved me to choose *Sri Aurobindo and Bergson* as the subject of my article for the first Annual, should also guide me in the choice of my subject for this year's Annual also. I chose Sri Aurobindo and Bergson chiefly on the ground that here we had two highly dynamic thinkers, one in the East and one in the West, who showed very clearly in their approach to the same philosophical problems the characteristic differences which separate the Indian from the Western standpoint. A comparative study of Sri Aurobindo and Bergson brought out very clearly the fundamental difference between the Indian and the Western view of intuition. An equally characteristic difference we notice in the Indian and the Western conception of value. A comparative study, therefore, of the philosophies of Sri Aurobindo and Nikolai Hartmann is of great interest, as herein we see the characteristic difference of the Indian and the Western approach to the philosophy of values. This philosophy is steadily growing in importance in the West and bids fair to be the main type of philosophical thinking there. A comparison, therefore, of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy with the most progressive form of this type of Western thought is highly desirable. This is my apology for choosing this subject for my article in this year's Annual. My task will be somewhat similar to that of Dickens in his *A Tale of Two Cities*, for I shall have to give a picture of two standpoints, one Indian, represented by Sri Aurobindo, and the other Western, represented by Hartmann, with this difference that I shall have to bring these pictures more closely into relation with each other than Dickens did his pictures of the two cities.

*Nikolai Hartmann has inherited the Platonic tradition of the Theory of Values.*

To start with Nikolai Hartmann. He has inherited the best and the most ancient Western tradition, the Platonic tradition of the philosophy of values. Not all philosophy of values is Platonic. But

the Platonic tradition is still the most powerful one in this philosophy. Münsterberg, Rickert, Stern, Windelband, Royce, Husserl, to mention only a few of the leading exponents of this philosophy to-day, are all more or less true to the Platonic tradition. But the man who has done the greatest service to this tradition and brought it the greatest honour and distinction is Nikolai Hartmann who, in his epoch-making three-volumed work on Ethics, has re-established it on somewhat newer foundations.

What, however, is this Platonic tradition? What are its leading ideas? To my mind, they are mainly two. The first is that values represent a world of their own, a world of ideas, as Plato called it, or a world of ideals, as we would call it, detached from the world in which we live, though imparting to it all dignity and worth. The other is that these ideals are many, not one, which are independent of one another and co-ordinate in rank, so that they form a plural world of independent units.

To these two main ideas of this tradition, Plato himself added one more, namely, the Idea of Good, a picture of which he gave us in his *Republic*. The third idea really runs counter to the second, for it proposes to do that which the second refuses to do, namely, unite all the ideas under one common highest idea, *viz.*, the Idea of Good. If I were to write an account of Plato's theory of ideas, I would certainly give this third idea a very important place, perhaps even put it at the head of the other two ideas. But I want to speak of the Platonic tradition of the philosophy of values, as it has been handed down in history, and there, unfortunately, it has not had much influence. Jowett says, "It is remarkable that although Plato speaks of the idea of good as the first principle of truth and being, it is nowhere mentioned in his writings except in this passage (of the *Republic*). Nor did it retain any hold upon the minds of his disciples in a later generation" (*The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Jowett, Third Edition, revised. Vol. III, p. xcvi). As he indicates, Plato himself is to blame for this, for he did not mention it except in some passages of the *Republic*,<sup>1</sup> and he certainly did not succeed in uniting it organically with the rest of his system, with the result that it is an isolated peak in his philosophy.

\* This is really a tragedy, for it has deprived this great conception of the influence which it would otherwise have had upon the development of the philosophy of values. Its influence has been felt in other directions. For instance, it has profoundly influenced Hegel and the neo-Hegelian philosophy of the nineteenth and the twentieth

<sup>1</sup> While I say this, I must admit that ideas similar to it occur elsewhere in Plato's writings, for example, in the remarkable passage in the *Symposium*, where Socrates narrates a talk he had with the wise woman Diotima, in the course of which the latter gave him an idea of Beauty which resembles very much the idea of Good.

century. But this philosophy is mainly ontological and not axiological. It has taken out of Plato's philosophy his Idea of Good, rejecting the other parts which are not consistent with it. Axiological philosophy, on the other hand, based upon Plato's theory of ideas, has mostly by-passed the Idea of Good, and has therefore been pluralistic. Where, as in Münsterberg and Rickert, a monistic philosophy of values has been reared upon Platonic foundations, we find that on the top a Hegelian ontological dome has been put stealthily,<sup>2</sup> as no axiological dome could be found which would fit the lower part of the building.

The Platonic tradition, therefore, of the philosophy of values is pluralistic. There is, firstly, the dualism of value and reality, and secondly, there is the pluralism of values. This tradition Hartmann, in common with others, has inherited, and on this inheritance as foundation he has reared a very fine philosophical structure.

The main features of this structure are, firstly, the helplessness of values in the matter of their realization,<sup>3</sup> secondly, his conception of the status of man, and thirdly, his dualism of values and disvalues. With each of these features I shall presently deal. But before I do so, I must turn to the other side of my task and give a picture of our ancient Indian tradition of the philosophy of values.

#### *The ancient Indian tradition of the Philosophy of Values.*

That tradition is monistic and not pluralistic. Its foundations are laid in that famous passage of the Brhadāranyakopaniṣad which may be regarded as the source of the Indian philosophy of values, as it expresses, partly by means of explicit language and partly by means of imagery, for its thought is sometimes too deep for words, the essential ideas of that philosophy. I give below a translation of it.<sup>4</sup>

"There are, assuredly, two forms of Brahman: the formed and the formless, the mortal and the immortal, the limited (*sthita*) and the unlimited (*yat*), the actual (*sat*) and the yon (*tyat*).

"This is the formed (Brahman)—whatever is different from the wind and the atmosphere. This is mortal, this is limited, this is actual. The essence of this formed, mortal, limited, actual (Brahman)

<sup>2</sup> See my articles on *The Problem of Value* ("Review of Philosophy and Religion", Vol. I, No. 2 and Vol. II, No. 1 (1930-31), where I have shown this very clearly.

<sup>3</sup> Whenever I shall speak of Hartmann's theory of values in this article I shall invariably refer to his theory of moral values, for it is here that the distinctive features of his theory are most evident.

<sup>4</sup> I have given R. E. Hume's translation as we find it at p. 97 of his *Thirteen Principal Upanishads* with a few changes here and there. For instance, the words '*sthitam*' and '*yat*', which he has translated as '*stationary*' and '*moving*', respectively, I have translated as '*limited*' and '*unlimited*'. Hume's translation retains no doubt the etymological meanings of these words, but it suffers from the defect that it makes *mūrta* the higher and *amūrta* the lower category, which is opposed to the general purport of the whole passage. I have therefore accepted Śaṅkara's interpretation of *sthitam* as '*paricchinna*', that is, '*limited*', and *yat* as '*aparicchinna*', that is, '*unlimited*'.

is yonder (sun) which gives forth heat, for that is the essence of the actual.

"Now the formless (Brahman) is the wind and the atmosphere. This is immortal, this is unlimited, this is the yon. The essence of this unformed, immortal, unlimited, yonder (Brahman) is the Person in that sun-disc, for he is the essence of the yon." Thus with reference to the divinities.

Now, with reference to the self: —

"Just that is the formed (Brahman) which is different from breath (prāṇa) and from the space which is within the self (ātman). This is mortal, this is limited, this is actual. The essence of this formed, mortal, limited, actual (Brahman) is the eye, for it is the essence of the actual.

"Now the formless (Brahman) is the breath and the space which is within the self. This is immortal, this is unlimited, this is the yon. The essence of this unformed, immortal, unlimited, yonder (Brahman) is this Person who is in the right eye, for he is the essence (*rasa*) of the yonder.

"The form of this Person is like a saffron-coloured robe, like white wool, like the (purple) Indragopa beetle, like a flame of fire, like the (white) lotus-flower, like a sudden flash of lightning. Verily, like a sudden lightning-flash is the glory of him who knows this.

"Hence, now, there is the teaching, 'Not this, not this' (*neti, neti*) for there is nothing higher than this, that he is thus. Now the designation for him is 'the Real of the real'. Verily, breathing creatures are the real. He is their Real." (Br. Up. 2. 3.)

This passage, as we see, begins by distinguishing two aspects of Brahman—the formed and the formless, the mortal (*martya*) and the immortal (*amṛta*), the limited (*sthita*) and the unlimited (*yat*). It then goes on declaring the Real as the *rasa*, that is, the value or essence of both. It is the essence both of the formed and the formless, of the mortal and the immortal, of the limited and the unlimited. It is also called 'not this, not this', thereby showing that it is different from everything that is existent. Reality as Value must transcend all existents. It cannot therefore be identified with either the formed or the formless, the mortal or the immortal, the limited or the unlimited. But although it transcends both these contradictory categories, it is yet the *rasa* or value of both. This aspect of Reality as Value is further emphasized in the concluding portion of this passage, where it is called 'the Real of the real' (*satyasya satyam*). The negative characterization of reality as '*neti, neti*' is thereby shown to have for its purpose the positive characterization of it as 'the Real of the real'.

The expression *satyasya satyam*, 'the Real of the real' points to a second order or dimension of reality. If the existential aspect of

reality is called the first order or dimension of it, then its value-aspect must be declared its second order or dimension. The passage of the Brhadāranyakopanishad brings out clearly the existence of this second dimension of reality. In Kena 1.2 also, we find a similar indication of a dimension of reality over and above that of existence. Here the Ultimate Reality is described as 'the ear of the ear', 'the mind of the mind', 'the speech of speech', 'the breath of breath', thereby clearly indicating the presence of a second layer of reality underneath the first.

This emphasis on the different dimensions of reality, one of which is called existence, another value, is one of the main teachings of the Upanishads. This became crystallized in the later Upanishads in the form of the conception of Saccidānanda. The expression Saccidānanda is no doubt found only in the later Upanishads, but an expression very similar to it is found in Br. Up. 3.9.28, where Brahman is called *viññānam ānandam brahma*. So also in Taitt. 2.1. it is called *satyam jñānam anantam*.

The conception of the Ultimate Reality as Saccidānanda is a wonderful triumph of philosophical speculation. It points out more clearly than anything else can do it, that existence, consciousness and value are not to be treated as mutually exclusive, but are to be looked upon as different components of the composite structure of Reality. It is the greatest gift of India to philosophy, and while it emphasizes the nature of Reality as Value, it does not fall into the hopeless dualism which unfortunately has marred the history of the philosophy of values in the West. The sheet-anchor of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy also is the conception of Saccidānanda. But before we deal with it we have to return to Nikolai Hartmann's philosophy.

### *The Degradation of the Conception of Value in Hartmann's Philosophy through its association with Dualism.*

I have already pointed out the essential dualism in the Platonic tradition of the philosophy of values. Nowhere perhaps do we realize this more clearly than in the philosophy of Hartmann who is perhaps the most brilliant exponent of this tradition to-day.

Hartmann's philosophy of values is frankly dualistic. He makes no attempt to hide this fact; it appears clearly on every page of his great work on ethics. He seems, in fact, to revel in dualism. There is the dualism of value and reality and there is further the pluralism of values. But in addition, there is a third dualism, the dualism of value and disvalue, which is also equally fundamental for him.

First, as regards the dualism of value and reality, this dualism is a characteristic feature of Hartmann's theory of moral values. These values live, as it were, in a cloudland, completely detached from the world of reality. So complete, in fact, is their isolation that they

cannot bring themselves into contact with reality except through an external agency. This external agency is man.

This gives man a unique position. He is the sole intermediary between the world of values and the world of reality. It is he and he alone who has the power to realize the values. If he chooses not to realize them, they have no chance of being realized. This invests him with a kind of semi-divinity. Although he has not got the power to create the values, it rests with him entirely whether they will emerge in the world of reality. He has therefore the power either to make or mar the world. In this precisely lies his freedom. Hartmann waxes eloquent on this: "He (the human agent) is not only a mirroring surface, something existing for himself in the real world and picturing the world's formations; he moulds, transforms and builds up; he is a world-creator in little. What he forms and builds up does not emanate from him himself, it is not his creation; it is something he has overheard from another world, to which he is responsively sensitive. But what he senses has no compulsion over him. It is only a good entrusted to him, the metaphysical import of which he feels as a claim laid upon him."<sup>5</sup>

In spite of all this eloquence, however, he has not been able to do justice, as we shall presently see, either to the values or to man.

*Hartmann's Theory of Values reduces them to a condition of Utter Impotence.*

Hartmann's theory of values, which has for its keynote their ontological helplessness and utter dependence upon human agency, is not at all flattering either to the values or to man. Not to the values, for to refuse to give them the power to realize themselves is to reduce them to a position of absolute impotence. Of what avail is their axiological superiority if it makes them absolutely dependent upon the will of man for their realization? It is absurd to suggest that this view invests them with great authority. Is it a sign of great authority to remain absolutely at the mercy of man for the chance of getting a footing in the world? Moreover, if history has taught us anything, it is that authority, divested of power, is a sham. If Hartmann is not in a position to give the values anything better than this mockery of authority, the sooner he gives up the pretence of making value the ultimate principle of his philosophy, the better. A true philosophy of values must give them not only authority but also power. Hartmann is only deceiving himself if he thinks he has placed axiology above ontology. He has not; in spite of his pretensions to the contrary, ontology still holds the palm in his philosophy.

<sup>5</sup> *Ethics*, Vol. I, pp. 260-61.



*Sri Aurobindo's position here compared with that of Hartmann.*

This constitutes one of the main weaknesses of Hartmann's philosophy. For this, however, his bad legacy is mainly to blame—the dualism of value and reality with which the Platonic tradition of the philosophy of values is infested.

In striking contrast to this inane view of values which makes them the very picture of helplessness, we have Sri Aurobindo's conception of them which makes them really the ultimate meta-physical principles. Instead of treating them as dependent upon the human will for their realization, he gives them the power to realize themselves whenever they choose to do so. It rests with them entirely how and when they will realize themselves. There is no external agency upon which they are dependent for their realization.

Further—and as a consequence of this fundamental difference in the conception of values—the realization of values means something essentially different from what it does in Hartmann's philosophy. It does not mean with Sri Aurobindo, as it does with Hartmann, the coming into existence of that which previously did not exist. It is not his position—and here he is true to the traditional Indian standpoint as we have already explained—that values are not real in themselves and have to *become* real. His position, on the contrary, is that values *are* real, real in themselves and eternally. Strictly speaking, therefore, it is wrong to speak of the realization of values. There is no harm, of course, in using the term, which has passed into philosophical currency in the West, provided we know exactly what it means, just as there is no harm in speaking of the sun rising or setting, though both these expressions are scientifically incorrect. It is well for us to remember, however, that this term in its literal sense is wrong. What happens when we speak of the realization of values is that values *descend* into the world. The world in fact has come into being and has attained its present status on account of such descent. From the point of view of values there is no realization, there is only descent. But from *our* point of view and from the point of view of the world, there is realization. That is to say, we become more and more real, we come nearer and nearer to reality, as there is further and further descent of the values. Realization, therefore, means for us *ascent*, ascent to higher and higher grades of reality, and for the values it means *descent*, descent of more and more of themselves into us and into the world.

This being understood, we can easily understand how absurd it is to say that the realization of values depends upon us human beings. We realize only when the values choose to descend. It is we who are helpless here and not the values. They descend according to their own nature, by their own law. We cannot dictate to them when they will descend or how they will descend. What lies with us is to realize

them *when* they descend. Our sole function is to keep ourselves ready for their descent, just as a householder has to keep his house ready for the reception of an honoured guest.

One change we have to make in the account we have given above of Sri Aurobindo's conception of the descent of values. We have spoken of values in the plural, but for Sri Aurobindo there is no plurality of values. There is for him one Value, which is also for him the one Reality. To this he gives the name Saccidānanda. It is the descent of this Saccidānanda in different forms—matter, life, mind, etc.—which gives us our different values, and it is the further descent of Saccidānanda in higher forms which will give us still higher values which have not emerged so far.

*The Absolute as Saccidānanda : Union of Existence, Consciousness-Force and Value.*

The pivot of his whole system is his conception of Saccidānanda. As I have already said, the central idea of Saccidānanda is the union of Existence, Consciousness and Value in the Absolute. It is India's challenge to the West. If the West has declared the union of Existence and Value impossible, India, through her conception of Saccidānanda, has shown how the problem can be solved.

Let us first take up Existence and Value. In what way are they combined in the Absolute? What is meant by saying that Reality is at once Existence and Value? Here we summon to our aid the great English philosopher Bradley. In his celebrated work *Appearance and Reality* he has characterized the two essentials of reality as existence and content, or in the technical phraseology of his, as the 'that' and the 'what'. The 'that' is the existential aspect and the 'what' the meaning or value aspect of reality. The full comprehension of reality must mean a comprehension of both these aspects. In feeling, he thinks, there is the presence of both but in a most inchoate form. In thought or reason there is a splitting of the two, and consequently, no adequate comprehension of reality. It is only in the higher intuition, which supervenes upon thought, that there is perfect union of the 'that' and the 'what', and consequently, a full comprehension of reality.

Without subscribing to Bradley's philosophy, there should be no hesitation in accepting the essential thing which Bradley points out, namely, that reality is the union of existence and value. This is, in fact, the fundamental standpoint of the philosophy of values as understood in our country, and Bradley in pointing it out, has proved himself to be a true philosopher of values, although in the West he is not regarded as such.

What Bradley calls the 'what' of Reality, Sri Aurobindo, following

the hoary tradition of our country, calls Ānanda or Delight.\* This term expresses the value-aspect of Reality. If it is asked: What does Reality stand for? Sri Aurobindo's answer is: Delight: "Delight is existence, Delight is the secret of creation. Delight is the root of Birth, Delight is the cause of remaining in existence, Delight is the end of birth and that into which creation ceases."<sup>7</sup> In another passage he says, "The self of things is an infinite indivisible existence; of that existence the essential nature or power is an infinite imperishable force of self-conscious being; and of that self-consciousness the essential nature or knowledge of itself is, again, an infinite inalienable delight of being".<sup>8</sup>

Delight being the content of the Absolute Reality, the extent and quality of Delight present at any stage of evolution precisely measure the value of that stage. What we call values are in fact nothing else than the different ways in which Delight has manifested itself. They are the successive emergents of Delight, the different forms which the descent of Delight has assumed. So far the chief emergents have been Matter, Life, Soul and Mind, and these, therefore, are the principal values which are present in the world. But other and higher values are yet to emerge. Especially, the value of the Supermind is to emerge, which will cause a radical change in the status of the world.

From this point of view, evil is not the complete absence of Delight but only its presence in a limited or partial form. The world in its present state is undoubtedly partially evil, for Delight in its pure, unalloyed form is not present in it. But this means nothing more than that the evolution of the world has not yet reached its highest stage. Evil as a permanent feature of the world is denied by Sri Aurobindo, for it runs counter to his fundamental position that Reality is Delight.

We have so far not spoken of the second aspect of Reality, its aspect as *Cit* or Consciousness. But the possibility of the descent of Delight and its emergence in higher forms depend upon this second aspect. This aspect is really the dynamic or power aspect of Reality, and therefore Sri Aurobindo calls it Consciousness-Force. If Reality is not to remain an impotent Existence, then it is essential that it should be looked upon as Consciousness-Force. The double character of this component of Reality must always be borne in mind. Reality must first of all be understood as Consciousness. The fifth *sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa—"ईक्षतेर्नाशब्दम्"<sup>9</sup> has settled this point once for all. Even

\* The Sanskrit word *Ānanda* has no proper English equivalent. 'Delight' is perhaps the nearest English equivalent.

<sup>7</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 152.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>9</sup> The meaning of this *sūtra* may be expressed as follows: "On account of deliberation being attributed to the Cause of the World, the Pradhāna cannot be identified with it, for it is against Scripture."

the so-called unconsciousness is itself a form of consciousness. Reality, therefore, is Consciousness. But in being Consciousness, it is also Power or Force. The nature of consciousness is to be dynamic, to move out of itself, to project itself out of itself, in other words, to create. The second *sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa—“जन्माद्यश्च यत इति” [“From whom the origin, etc. (of the world) takes place”]—indicates this essential creativity of Reality.

This second aspect of Reality is essential not only for the creation of the world but also for its evolution, for evolution is only the reverse side of the movement of creation. That activity by which the Real projects itself out of itself must cause it also to return to itself, and this second movement is what is called evolution. This movement may also be described as the successive emergence of higher and higher forms of Delight, that is to say, of higher and higher values. Without it there would be absolute stagnation in the world and no hope of any progress.

It is essential therefore to maintain all the three aspects of Reality. This is Sri Aurobindo's improvement upon Bradley.

*Second Defect of Hartmann's Theory of Values: it shows an inadequate comprehension of the Value and Destiny of Man.*

Let us return to Hartmann. We have seen that the inherent weakness of his philosophy is to make values absolutely impotent and dependent entirely upon the human will for what is called their realization. On the face of it, it seems that if Hartmann has not been able to do justice to the values, he has at least done full justice to man. Hartmann himself believes ~~it~~ and is inordinately proud of it. For instance, he says, with regard to teleological metaphysics, which subordinates ontological to axiological determination,<sup>10</sup> “This metaphysic of value, however impressive it may seem to us, nevertheless does violence to the problem of value, and ultimately, to ethics. Indeed, it is a failure to recognize man's place in the cosmos. If there be a universal and real teleology of values in the world, then all reality from beginning to end conforms to valuational principles and is based upon them as constitutive. But in that case values are ontological categories and, as such, are entirely actualized. And man with his sphere of action is altogether eliminated. He is superfluous. The values prevail without his consciousness of them and without his contributing to reality’. In the same strain he speaks in another passage,<sup>11</sup> “... the cosmic insignificance of man is not the last word: besides the ontological there is still an axiological determination of the world, and in this, man plays an integrating rôle. In this his insignificance is overborne—without a re-introduction of anthro-

<sup>10</sup> *Ethics*, Vol. I, p. 242.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

pocentric megalomania. Man, a vanishing quantity in the universe, is still in his own way stronger than it: he is the vehicle of a higher principle, he is the creator of a reality which possesses significance and value, he transmits to the real world a higher worth".

It is clear from these passages that Hartmann believes that it is one of the strong points of his philosophy that it maintains fully the worth and dignity of man. But is it really so? He has no doubt succeeded in giving great power to man. For it rests with him either to make or mar the world. But the possession of power by itself does not connote any spiritual eminence. He gives us no indication that man will ever rise to a position when his power will be only a power for good. For him the power is always either for good or for evil. He cannot envisage a condition when the power to do evil will desert man.

He keeps man fixed at his present level. He has prepared a Procrustean bed for him which will for ever destroy all his chances of real advancement. He does not think it will do any good to man to receive light from a Higher Source. Rather he thinks it will do him harm, for it will mean the annihilation of his freedom.

Yes, that is the fear which always haunts him—the fear of man losing his freedom. Rather than that man should lose his freedom, he should keep him for ever confined within the narrow circle of his moral life. He would shut out all Divine Grace from him lest it should rob him of his freedom.

If this is not fetishism, I do not know what fetishism is. Is freedom of such inestimable value that it is to be maintained at any cost? What is freedom worth if it means a divorce between God and man? If to maintain freedom we have to shut out Divine Grace, we would rather say: Save us from freedom.

He makes a sharp contrast between the religious standpoint which sacrifices man and the world in which he lives in order to make room for Divine Grace, and the ethical standpoint which saves man and his freedom. "All genuine religion", he says,<sup>12</sup> "tends to look from our present existence to a 'better' world. The extreme emphasis which has sometimes been laid upon this distinction, and which, after all, is only logical, reaches a point at which our mundane sphere has no value whatever of its own—is heard of only as a preparation for the other world... Hence the demand that this world with its apparent values be sacrificed for the sake of that true existence and its values; since no one can serve two masters... Ethics has exactly the reverse tendency. It is wholly committed to this life... From the ethical point of view, the tendency toward the Beyond is just as contrary to value as, from the religious point of view, is the tendency toward this world. It is a waste of moral energy and a diversion of it away from

<sup>12</sup> *Ethics*, Vol. III, pp. 262-63.

true values and their actualization, and on that account is not moral. . . .”

The contrast between the two points of view is more striking in the case of salvation. “Salvation itself”—so runs his clear verdict—“is ethically contrary to value, quite irrespective of the fact that it is also ethically impossible. Yet, from the religious point of view, it is not only possible but is even the most important and valuable benefit which can accrue to man. Ethically it is a degradation of man; religiously, an elevation”.<sup>13</sup>

In this way he goes on, contrasting further and further the two standpoints, without even making an attempt to reconcile them. Not only so, but he believes that such an attempt is impossible. “Here”, he says, “there is a radical and rigid contradiction, which spurns every compromise that one might suggest. By over-refined reconciliation one only obscures and falsifies the opposing claims of God and man”.<sup>14</sup>

So it is his deliberate view that the claims of God and man cannot be reconciled. If human freedom and human personality are to be maintained, God is to be completely wiped out of the picture.

This view does great injustice to the moral life. It makes it, as it were, an island, cut off on the one hand from Nature, and on the other, from God. Such an isolated position makes it impossible for the moral life to grow. It may retain no doubt its freedom, but this freedom will be only another name for stagnation.

But that to which it does the greatest injustice is man himself. This is perhaps the greatest tragedy of Hartmann’s system, for, as we have seen, he strongly believes that he has enormously raised the status of man by making him a sort of semi-creator. In reality, far from raising his status, he has extremely lowered it, for he has shut him out completely from Divine Grace. The disjunction “Either God or man” takes away his most valued prerogative, namely, that of being the recipient of Divine Grace.

*God is the Fulfilment and Not the Negation of Man.*

Against Hartmann’s “God or Man”, Sri Aurobindo maintains the thesis *God in Man*. Man’s freedom does not mean freedom to be damned, but freedom to be saved. And saved he is and saved he can be only by being linked with God. He is free, so far as he is near to God, not so far as he is removed from God. What Hartmann calls freedom is, in Sri Aurobindo’s vocabulary, called egoism, which he defines as the self-assertiveness of the finite and the particular. This self-assertiveness, in his view, is the root of all evil. As he puts it, “they (falsehood and evil) are circumstances or results that arise only at a certain stage when assertiveness culminates in opposition”.<sup>15</sup> If

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>15</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 467.

freedom in the Hartmannian sense is to be looked upon as the prerogative of man, evil will become permanent for him, as there will be no possibility of his ever getting rid of it.

This, in Sri Aurobindo's view, means the negation of man, the destruction of all his hopes and aspirations, in a word, his complete effacement. For his hope and his aspiration—as also his privilege—is to be something more than mere man, to be a Divine Man or a Gnostic Being. Hartmann's conception of human freedom will for ever put an end to this aspiration and reduce man to a condition where he will be indistinguishable from a brute.

What a contrast this to the picture of human destiny as revealed in the following prophetic words of Sri Aurobindo:

“If there is an evolution in material Nature and if it is an evolution of being with consciousness as its two key-terms and powers, this fullness of being, fullness of consciousness, fullness of life must be the goal of development towards which we are tending and which will manifest at an early or late stage of our destiny. The self, the spirit, the reality that is disclosing itself out of the first inconscience of life and matter, would evolve its complete truth of being and consciousness in that life and matter. It would return to itself—or, if its end as an individual is to return into its Absolute, it could make that return also—not through a frustration of life but through a spiritual completion of itself in life. Our evolution in the Ignorance with its chequered joy and pain of self-discovery and world-discovery, its half fulfilments, its constant finding and missing, is only our first state. It must lead inevitably towards an evolution in the knowledge, a self-finding and self-unfoldment of the Spirit, a self-revelation of the Divinity in things in that true power of itself in Nature which is to us still a Supernature”<sup>16</sup>

*Problem of Disvalue : Comparison of the Views of Hartmann and Sri Aurobindo on this Problem.*

I now come to the last part of my task, namely, a comparison of the views of Hartmann and Sri Aurobindo on the problem of disvalue. One of the main features of Hartmann's theory of values is the sharp antithesis it makes between value and disvalue. But the question is: Can this antithesis be regarded as an essential feature of the philosophy of values?

When I say 'good', I no doubt distinguish it from 'bad'. But do I thereby treat it as entirely different from the good, in other words, as the absolute antithesis of it? In plain English, is it not possible to look upon the bad also as a kind of good?

I venture to think it is. We must remember in the first place

<sup>16</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 1185-86.

that the distinction between value and disvalue is made on the plane of values, if we may say so, and not on any other plane. The disvalue, therefore, has a meaning only in this plane. It is a value, in fact, which runs counter to, or is opposed to the positive or constructive value. But the opposition is never absolute. The disvalues are never in a position to suppress the corresponding values. They seem only to indicate the present ontological weakness of the values, that is to say, their failure at present to force themselves into the world. But this failure is only temporary. Values have a coercive power. They are bound sooner or later to force ontological reality to receive them. The main weakness of Hartmann's philosophy, from Sri Aurobindo's point of view, lies in his failure to recognize this, in his supposition that values are permanently at the mercy of ontological reality.

But if we do not accept the ontological weakness of values as a permanent feature of them, the status of disvalues will undergo a complete change. They will then live only on sufferance. And evolution will mean a progressive elimination of them, or rather we should say, a progressive transformation, for disvalues will change their character, modify their attitude of hostility towards values and ultimately merge themselves in the latter.

Disvalues, in fact, serve only the purpose of reminding us of the imperfections of our present values, which means really the imperfections of our present stage of evolution. The values that have emerged so far are really not values, that is to say, not complete and perfect values, and that is why disvalues are present.

Disvalues, therefore, do not form a separate class by the side of the values. They owe their origin to the fact that the values that have emerged so far are not in the fullest sense values, and that, in consequence, part of their meaning is expressed through disvalues. Mind, for example, cannot be looked upon as a perfect value. It is only an incomplete expression of Delight. All the constructions of mind, therefore, are charged with opposition and contradiction. This opposition and contradiction, which we call a disvalue, is itself part of the content of the value called mind.

This, in brief, is the essential difference between Sri Aurobindo's position and that of Hartmann on the question of disvalues. For Sri Aurobindo disvalues are a temporary feature of the world. They are only a reminder to us that the present stage of the world's evolution is not the highest which it can attain, in other words, that evil, which is the general name for all disvalues, is bound to disappear, or rather, to be transformed into good. How this happens, from Sri Aurobindo's standpoint, I indicated in the article\* which I contributed last year to this Annual.

\* *Vide* "Sri Aurobindo and the Problem of Evil" in *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Third Annual*, 1944, pp. 120-144.



# The Later Poems of Sri Aurobindo

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Taste in poetry is mostly acquired. No one inherits a bent or bias towards, say, the poetry of the Augustans or the Metaphysicals. Or, probably, it is the bent or bias that alone may be there, but not the æsthetic equipment, the necessary training in enjoyment, which however it might later on develop. The many and varied revaluations in modern critical theory have forced us to accept such fungus, such weeds and tares of poetic creation which, but a few decades ago, would have shocked all right-thinking people. In such an atmosphere of enforced catholicism it becomes an entirely self-willed crassness, a meaningless foreshortening of our psychic horizon if we do not respond to these later poems of Sri Aurobindo, merely because of the apparent difficulty of fitting them into the scheme of 'modern' poetry. After having allowed so much to pass there seems no reason why we should be straining at this—what may be called—yogic poetry. For this "future poetry" is not without many an intimation in the past, its "steady lightnings" have been hinted at long before, "with intermittent glancings as if from behind a veil or with occasional displays in our material skies." A little honesty reveals the long lineage supporting this trend of 'supramental' poetry, and its continuance, through vicissitudes, as a concomitant of certain types of emotional, intellectual operations of the human consciousness.

There is, however, a modified novelty about these poems inasmuch as the medium used is that of a modern language, English. The English reader will, it is true, experience some difficulties in placing these alongside the traditions of his own poetry, and more with his social history. Shorn of the time-spirit, that is of those aspects of it with which he had been familiar, they might look unreal to him.

The history and geography of these poems, the field of their manifestation, is the eternal landscape—not without its sheer heights—of spiritual experiences, tinged by the Indian *yoga-sādhana*. To approach them in any but this perspective would falsify the spirit behind them. Without doubt Sri Aurobindo has run the risk of being treated as an eccentric, his very wholeness turning obsolete and an anathema. For, he neither whimpers nor does he cry Red Front. As it is he is caviare to the general. And, then, the links of his poetic evolution are missing. He has moved, but on lines that are not poetry's. His later verse, when it comes out faces us with the finished product—'those are pearls that were his eyes'—but without hinting at or taking us to the process of development, unless, of course, we admit the approach indicated above.

The present ban on the romantics may also have some adverse effect. Sri Aurobindo is not a romantic. Still it is with them that parallelisms will be drawn—and offer themselves. The first 'smell' of his poetry may give rise, among certain critics, to a facile reaction of rejection and disparagement. An inspired critic has dismissed him, poetry and all, as a

supramental chatterer. All this may delay its recognition, but not, one hopes, indefinitely.

To summarise: Not only have we a propinquity with this ancient but ever-new poetry, it ought also to be possible for us, if we so choose, to enter into the regions of consciousness the poet has opened out before us. Here the *ākāsa-gaṅgā* is in spate, and the limp leaves wet with rain.

*Six Poems*, 1934, and *Transformation and Other Poems*, 1941, contain the only twelve poems to be published so far out of "the great mass of poems written during the twenties and thirties and after". It is in these that the mature Aurobindean tone and feeling have quietly emerged, revealing a full-throated ease, dignity and flexibility of execution, and we seem to move into "an ampler ether, a diviner air". It is in these (leaving aside the poems in Appendix B of Vol. II of the *Collected Poems and Plays*) that Sri Aurobindo has found himself most, and it is difficult to praise them adequately. No anthology of verse can ignore these poems which are an addition to the existing poetry of the world. But the apparatus of appreciation itself is not available, and if found might run counter to many of the cherished idols of to-day. More correctly, it would add another to the already existing ones.

It will be an exaggeration to say that these poems mark a new bearing on modern poetry. But we need not be struck all of a heap nor go baresark if they actually did, sooner or later. Other accidents than tagging on polyglot clichés have happened to the "jug jug to dirty ear"-wallahs. To say that modern poetry is progressing *en bloc* to yogic or *mantric* poetry would be silly and senseless; but to suggest that among many other trends there is one pointing towards it will be but stating a truism. But none so blind as those who refuse to see.

All things in the *lila* can, it is true, turn into windows that open on the hidden reality, but some things more than the rest.

"The best works of literary, plastic and musical art give us more than pleasure. . . . These tell us, by strange but certain implication, something significant about the ultimate reality behind appearances"

It is this actuality, this triumphant convincingness, in telling us something significant about the ultimate reality behind appearances, which the later Aurobindean verse carries with itself. His description of how from time to time in a song, a poem, an image, a strain of music one can get a contact, a response and an experience "of something other than Thought", applies equally to his own poetry.

"Strangely, a barrier in the mind breaks down, something is seen, a profound change operated in some inner part, there enters into the ground of nature something calm, equal, ineffable. One stands upon a mountain ridge and glimpses or mentally feels a wideness, a pervasiveness, a nameless Vast in Nature; then suddenly comes the touch, a revelation, a flooding, the mental lapses itself in the spiritual, one bears the first invasion of the Infinite. Or you stand before a temple of *Kālī* beside a sacred river and see what?—a sculpture, a gracious piece of architecture, but in a moment mysteriously, unexpectedly there is a Presence, a Power, a Face that looks into yourself, an inner sight in you has regarded the World-Mother. Similar touches can come through art, music, poetry to their creator or one feels the shock of the word, the hidden significance of a form, a message in the sound that carries more perhaps than was consciously meant by the composer."

<sup>1</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> *The Riddle of This World*, pp. 40-41.

Outside religious poetry such poetry of the supramental as Sri Aurobindo's has always been rare. Even within the fold it has by no means been common. For many and obvious reasons. The ascent towards the supermind has been mostly unaccompanied by any urge for manifestation. The Transcendent itself has been frequently regarded as a nihil or an abstract, featureless silence. As such even the expressions that have been thereof are dry and desiccated, incorrigibly philosophical. Or, what has perhaps been commoner, the experiences have been clouded over with partial and inferior realisations. The language has smacked of the vital and the mental. The native dynamics of the supramental cannot, it is true, be communicated in words by the many. That implies a word-wizardry, a sensitiveness to the shock of words and a manipulation of language that is always rare. But Sri Aurobindo has dared the impossible, of draping the wordless in words. He is thus one of the pioneers in modern times of this new poetry.

"A soul expressing the eternal spirit of Truth and Beauty through some of the infinite variations of beauty, with the word for its instrument, that is, after all, what the poet is and it is to a similar soul in us seeking the same spirit and responding to it that he makes his appeal. . . . It is the impersonal spirit of Truth and Beauty that is seeking to express through personality and it is that which finds its own word and seems itself to create in highest moments of inspiration."

"The poet may not always or often find it, but to seek for it is the law of his utterance and when he cannot only find it but cast into it some deeply revealed truth of the Spirit itself, he utters (what we in this country call) the *Mantra*."<sup>3</sup>

For poetry to be *mantra* three conditions, according to him, should be fulfilled: the highest intensity of rhythmic movement, the highest intensity of verbal form—the words themselves may be very simple—and thought-substance, and the highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth. The rarity of this kind of poetry is easily explained!

For even our mystical poetry has been dark and abstruse or else couched in sense-imagery. Our metaphysical poetry is a record of agitation and conflict, a grand subjectivism. Our idealistic verse is a graph of longing and despair, "of all the unhealthy and o'erdarkened ways made for our weeping," overhung with "the mists of despondency and gloom." More than one critic has pointed out—indeed it is a stock-in-trade—how frequently mystic poetry borrows human analogies, mostly erotic analogies. The names of Rossetti and Patmore, though neither of them is a happy representative, come to the mind. Among the metaphysicals the emphasis falls mainly on the quality and convolutions of an individual consciousness. Its characteristic wit lies in amalgamating dissimilar sensibilities, what Dr. Johnson analysed as finding "occult resemblances in things apparently unlike," and in a certain acerbity and directness of phrasing. Donne, the typical, and according to some the only, metaphysical poet, is often confusing spiritual, vital and mental values. "One of the marked characteristics of Donne's poetry is his continual comparison of mental and spiritual with physical processes."<sup>4</sup> The idealist Shelley "shrieks, and clasps his hands in ecstasy." Blake will not cease from his "mental

<sup>3</sup> From *The Future Poetry*.

<sup>4</sup> Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English Literature*.

fight". Sri Aurobindo's mysticism, metaphysics and idealism are not, to put it briefly, "Western".<sup>5</sup>

This "bondage of the flesh or mind" is acutely felt in the poetry of Arnold. Mind and thought

Keep us prisoners of our consciousness  
And never let us clasp and feel the All,  
But through their forms and modes, and shifting veils.  
And we shall be unsatisfied as now ;  
And we shall feel the agony of thirst,  
The ineffable longing for the life of life  
Baffled for ever . . . . .

Slave of sense  
I have in no wise been ; but slave of thought ? -  
And who can say : I have been always free,  
Lived ever in the light of my own soul ?—  
I cannot ! I have lived in wrath and gloom,  
Fierce, disputatious, ever at war with man,  
Far from my own soul, far from warmth and light.

But here in these poems of Sri Aurobindo is the breath of another ether, the rhythm of another world, "the light of his own soul". Ratiocination has now been left behind. The poems are no longer thought-ridden or philosophical. (They are, it may also be noted, amoral, beyond good and evil). But this is a mixed blessing, for because of it the few links between the poet and the readers are taken away. The knot of the senses and the intellect (according to the Upanishads the intellect or *manas* is a sense) is broken. These poems are an expansion of sensibility and consciousness to unknown, or at the best rarely divined, modes of the being. If you say, "how dare we expect that our eyes, whether of the body or of the soul, can be made to see more than they do see ? The objection is plausible, indeed serious, but is met and refuted in experience. From the beginning of humanity there have been men whose peculiar office it has been to see, and to make others see, that which without their aid would never have been discovered. They are the artists."<sup>6</sup>

As far back as in *The Rishi* he had said :

But we must dare  
To still the mind into a perfect sleep  
And leave this lair  
Of gross material flood which we would keep  
Always, before  
The guardians of felicity will open  
The golden door.

That golden door is now opened. In the language of *The Mother of Dreams* : "There at the gates of heavenly states thou hast planted thy wand enchanted over the head of the Yogin waving." With Sri Aurobindo rapt in these heavenly states, unheard melodies are heard, but not as in a hallucination; colour combinations, but not as in a surrealist dream-fantasy, seen ; experiences, but not neurotic nor high-strung, communicated. "World after world bursts on the awakened

<sup>5</sup> Cf. "Most men mistake intellectuality, imaginative inspiration or emotional fervour for spirituality, but this is a much higher function, the highest of all, of which all others are coverings and veils." *The National Value of Art*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Algot Ruhe, quoted in *Creative Revolution*, by Eden and Cedar Paul, p. 182.

sight". The hushed grandeur of these poems out-top all human passions, and their radiance cannot be missed. Something depends, however, on the right understanding of the metres and the verse-technique employed, for otherwise a correct reading becomes difficult, if not impossible. And there is a profusion of technical innovations and experiments in most of these poems. Mercifully, Sri Aurobindo provides brief, valuable and interesting notes on the poems, metrical and ideological.

It will be convenient here to summarise the Mother's opinion on the yogi-artist. "His personality counts no longer ; he is an agent, a channel."

All is abolished but the mute alone.

The mind from thought released, the heart from grief,

Grow inexistent now beyond belief ;

There is no I, no Nature, no Known-unknown.

A silent unnamed emptiness content

Either to fade in the Unknowable

Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

(*Nirvana*).

Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme

And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine

Channels of rapture and opal and hyaline

For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme.

(*Transformation*).

The yogi-artist's art is "a means of expressing his relations with the Divine. He uses it for the purpose as he might have used any other means that were part of the powers of nature. . . . Art is a living harmony and beauty that must be expressed in all the movements of existence. This manifestation of beauty and harmony is part of the Divine realisation upon earth, perhaps even its greatest part.

"For from the supramental point of view beauty and harmony are as important as any other expression of the Divine. . . . Art is nothing less in its fundamental truth than the aspect of beauty of the Divine manifestation. Perhaps, looking from this standpoint, there will be found very few true artists ; but still there are some and these can very well be considered as Yogis. For like a Yogi an artist goes into deep contemplation to await and receive his inspiration. To create something truly, he has first to see within ; only when so found, seen, held within, can he execute it outwardly ; he creates according to this greater inner vision. This too is a kind of communion with the inner worlds. A man like Leonardo da Vinci was a Yogi and nothing else. . . .

"There is a domain far above the mind which we could call the world of Harmony and, if you can reach there, you will find the root of all harmony that has been manifested in whatever form upon earth. . . . Those that may have gone there before, found it perhaps happier, more pleasant or more full of a rapturous ease to remain and enjoy the Beauty and the Delight that are there, not manifesting, not embodying it upon earth. But the abstention is not all the truth nor the true truth of Yoga ; it is rather a deformation, a diminution of the dynamic freedom of Yoga by the mere spirit of Sannyāsa. The will of the Divine is to manifest, not to remain altogether withdrawn in inactivity and an absolute silence ; if the Divine Consciousness were really an inaction of unmanifesting bliss there would never have been any creation."

*Words of the Mother*, Ch. xiv.

The poems in both these books are short, the longest being a little over two pages. But their brevity is essential, in the sense that Santayana speaks of the beautiful as the contemplation of the essential.

*The Bird of Fire* ("is the living vehicle of the gold fire of the Divine Light and the white fire of the Divine Tapas and the crimson fire of Divine Love—and everything else of the Divine Consciousness") might appear obscure for our unilluminated sensibility.

Gold-white wings a throb in the vastness, the bird of flame went  
glimmering over a sunfire curve to the haze of the west,  
Skimming, a messenger sail, the sapphire-summer waste of a soundless  
wayless burning sea. . . .

Gold-white wings of the miraculous bird of fire, late and slow have  
you come from the Timeless. Angel, here unto me  
Bringest thou for travailing earth a spirit silent and free or  
His crimson passion of love divine,—

White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the vats  
brimming with light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy,  
Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in Time  
from his sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine? . . . .

Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like blood of a soul climbing  
the hard crag-teeth world, wounded and nude,  
A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase  
of moon-edged night and rising day.

O Flame who art Time's last boon of the sacrifice, offering-flower  
held by the finite's gods to the Infinite,  
O marvel bird with the burning wings of light and the unbarred lids  
that look beyond all space,

One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of mind  
and life, arrives at its luminous term thy flight ;  
Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire  
thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face.

A superficial reaction would probably condemn these lines, this "miracle of rare device", as ornate and Swinburnean word-spilling. But a deeper saturation or a capacity for opening alone can hold that delight and that vision, not without its own logic, from which the symbol and the images are born, a delight which has been aptly communicated in the tenuous, quivering yet firmly held and radiant texture of the verse. It is a vibration of many-hued silence. Its esoteric imagery, the "brimming with light-blaze" colouration ; the skimming of the gold-white wings of the miraculous bird of fire ending in "one strange leap of thy mystic stress", the tremor of its winged movement ; its aethereal flight, above all, its unity of atmosphere and impression reveals a creator who sees and holds it steadily and whole. It is clear that it is "by an extension and intensification, by a finer and superior organisation of consciousness", that the poem has been achieved. As Romain Rolland said, in a wider and different context, "the last of the great Rishis holds in his hand, in firm unreleased grip, the bow of creative energy." It is necessary to add that, metrically, the poem is "a kind of compromise between the stress system and the foot measure. The stanza is of four lines alternately of twelve and ten stresses. The second and fourth lines in each stanza can

be read as a ten-foot line of mixed iambs and anapaests, the first and third . . . are still mainly readable by stresses."

*Trance* conveys a briefer evocation :

My mind is awake in stirless trance,  
Hushed my heart, a burden of delight ;  
Dispelled is the senses' flicker-dance,  
Mute the body aureate with light.

O star of creation, pure and free,  
Halo-moon of ecstasy unknown,  
Storm-breath of the soul-change yet to be,  
Ocean self-enraptured and alone !

It is in these trance states, in "domains far above the mind," that sights and sounds denied to the commonalty are revealed.

An irised multitude of hills and seas,  
And glint of brooks in the green wilderness,  
And trackless stars, and mirrored symphonies  
Of hues that float in ethers shadowless,  
A dance of fire-flies in the fretted gloom,  
In a pale midnight the moon's silver flare,  
Fire-impurities of scarlet bloom  
And bright suddenness of wings in a golden air,  
Strange bird and animal forms like memories cast  
On the rapt silence of unearthly woods,  
Calm faces of the gods on backgrounds vast  
Bringing the marvels of the infinitudes,  
Through glimmering veils of wonder and delight  
World after world bursts on the awakened sight.

(*The Other Earths*).

"Bringing the marvels of the infinitudes" it is yet sufficiently self-explanatory, and the poetry does not suffer because of the explanation. The recondite language draws attention : 'green wilderness', 'symphonies of hues', 'ethers shadowless', the contradictions with which mystical literature is (perforce?) strewn. Another point about the poem is the quality of assent which it, on the whole, evokes. There is not so much a willing suspension of disbelief as that disbelief never enters into our reaction. Away from the average and the quotidian it certainly is. But it is real for all that, and it is not vague. Truly speaking the poet is merely giving form to what most of us have felt and known in certain moods and moments. The poet has fulfilled his function, in M. Valéry's phrase, of *les préposés aux choses vagues*—mediators between men and the surrounding mystery. A line like

Calm faces of the gods on backgrounds vast

has a haunting reality and carries with it its seal of authenticity. It is not of the type of fancy that builds Xanadu nor the Miltonic rhetoric. Sri Aurobindo can show because he has seen.\* If these poems are to be dismissed as merely subjective, as fumes of oriental fantasy, let us remind

\* Cf. Eliot's remark, "that Hell, though a state, is a state which can only be thought of, and perhaps only experienced, by the projection of sensory images; and that the resurrection of the body has perhaps a deeper meaning than we understand." What is true of Hell as a state would be equally true of Aurobindean "heavenly states", "the sun-realms of supernal seeing". Supernal and seeing, what else is the ideal of the *drashī*, the Seer?

ourselves of Cuspensky's verdict on subjective art and knowledge : "Objective knowledge does not study facts but *only the perception of facts*. Subjective knowledge studies the *facts*—the facts of consciousness—the only real facts. Thus objective knowledge has to do with the unreal, with the reflected, the imaginary world ; subjective knowledge has to do with the real world."

*Shiva* is given a theoretical tinge, in the Notes and in the sub-heading, "The Inconscient Creator". But apart from the theory, the poem is massively real and has "the deep authentic mountain thrill". It is not a *mantra*, nor even a photograph, it is a re-creation of Shiva through the medium of English words and rhythm.

A face on the cold dire mountain peaks  
Grand and still ; its lines white and austere  
Match with the unmeasured snowy streaks  
Cutting heaven, implacable and sheer.

Above it a mountain of matted hair,  
Æon-coiled on that deathless and lone head  
In its solitude huge of lifeless air  
Round, above illimitably spread.

A moon-ray on the forehead blue and pale,  
Stretched afar its finger of still light  
Illuming emptiness. Stern and male  
Mask of peace indifferent in might !

Eliot has suggested somewhere that people in the mediæval ages had the power of vision which later ages have lost. In the East the tradition of the poet as a Rishi or *drashtā*, the Seer, has never run dry. Sri Aurobindo's poetry is a vision, and not visionary.

*The Life Heavens* is considerably a poem of statement and contains an indirect exposition of one of his favourite ideas.

"The idea is that the other worlds are not evolutionary but typal, and each presents in a limited perfection some aspect of the Infinite, but each complete, perfectly satisfied in itself, not asking or aspiring for anything else, for self-exceeding of any kind. That aspiration, on the contrary, is self-imposed on the imperfection of Earth ; the very fact of the Divine being there, but suppressed in its phenomenal opposites, compels an effort to arrive at the unveiled Divine—by ascent, but also by a descent of the Divine Perfection for evolutionary manifestation here. That is why the Earth declares itself a deeper power than Heaven, because it holds in itself the possibility implied in the presence of the suppressed Divine here—which does not exist in the perfection of the vital (or even the mental) Heavens."

In *Ahana* the Hunters of Joy had spoken of :

Two are the ends of existence, two are the dreams of the Mother :  
Heaven unchanging, earth with her time-beats yearn to each other,—  
Earth-souls needing the touch of heaven's peace to recapture,  
Heaven needing earth's passion to quiver its peace to rapture.

*The Life Heavens* opens with a description of the immobile heavens, where "all things are a harmony faultless, pure." The poet's soul "lay at ease in a sweetness of heaven-sense, delivered from grief, with no need

\* Cf. *The Mother*, pp. 55-59 for a description of Mahākālī.



left to aspire". In that lulled and dispersed state suddenly soars a dateless cry, "Earth's outcry to the limitless Sublime".

"I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven ;  
 My lonely sorrow surpasses its rose-joys,  
 A red and bitter seed of the raptures seven ;—  
 My dumbness fills with echoes of a far Voice.  
 "By me the last finite, yearning, strives  
 To reach the last infinity's unknown,  
 The Eternal is broken into fleeting lives  
 And Godhead pent in the mire and the stone."

In this there is no self-dramatisation nor an excited longing and certainly no sentimentality. It is informed with a reserve of strength, a clear-eyed realisation of the end to be achieved.<sup>10</sup>

*Jivanmukta* takes up "the Vedantic ideal of the living liberated man". Sri Aurobindo shows considerable sense of humour, if that is the correct expression, when he adds in the note to the poem, "although perhaps I have given a pull towards my own ideal which the strict Vedantin would consider illegitimate".

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,  
 To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour  
 And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,  
 Casting down light on the inconscient darkness,  
 He acts and lives. Vain things are mind's smaller motives  
 To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession  
 Infinity and the sempiternal  
 All is his guide and beloved and refuge.

*In Horis Aeternum* is a dream from "here or elsewhere". "This poem on its technical side aims at finding a halfway house between free verse and regular metrical poetry. It is an attempt to avoid that chaotic amorphousness of free verse and keep to a regular form based on the fixed number of stresses in each line and part of a line while yet there shall be a great plasticity and variety in all the other elements of poetic rhythm. . . . ." The best commentary on the poem will be found in one of the statements contained within it—"moment-mere, yet with all eternity packed".

A far sail on the unchangeable monotone of a slow slumbering sea,  
 A world of power hushed into symbols of hue, silent unendingly ;  
 Over its head like a gold ball the sun tossed by the gods in their play  
 Follows its curve,—a blazing eye of Time watching the motionless day.  
 Here or elsewhere,—poised on the unreachable abrupt snow-solitary

ascent  
 Earth aspiring lifts to the illimitable Light, then ceases broken and  
 spent,

<sup>10</sup> His stability of vision becomes clearer from a letter he had written to a reader who found easy optimism in this poem. "Where do you find in 'The Life Heavens' that the conditions on earth are glorious and suited to the Divine Life? . . . The Earth is an evolutionary world . . . most sorrowful, disharmonious, imperfect. Yet in that imperfection is the urge towards a higher and many-sided perfection. It contains the last finite which yet yearns to be the supreme Infinite. God pent in mire (mire is not glorious, so there is no claim to glory or beauty here) but the very fact imposes a necessity to break through the prison to a consciousness which is ever rising towards the heights. And so on. That is 'deeper power', though not a great actual glory of perfection."

Or in the glowing expanse, arid, fiery and austere, of the desert's  
hungry soul,—  
 A breath, a cry, a glimmer from Eternity's face, in a fragment the  
mystic whole.

In this obscure and mysterious poem, with its peculiar, discontinuous imagery and word-suggestions, its manipulation of the body as well as the tempo of the verse, its transitions which are not easy to follow, there is, one feels, more than what meets the eye. For there is, so well hinted at an otherwhere too. Its architectonics is, we feel, subtler and different from the organisation of experience with which we are familiar. The aspiring Earth need not, however, be broken and spent for all times. Is not the aspiration itself a chart to the unknown?

In *Thought the Paraclete* the sudden gust of *Revelation* is steadied and elaborated with a greater richness of close-packed phrasing, "crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned".

As some bright archangel in vision flies  
 Plunged in dream-caught spirit immensities,  
 Past the long green crests of the seas of life,  
 Past the orange skies of the mystic mind,  
 Flew my thought self-lost in the vasts of God. . . .  
 Hungering, large-souled to surprise the unconned  
 Secrets white-fire-veiled of the last Beyond,  
 Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,  
 Climbing high far ethers eternal-sunned,  
 Thought the great-winged wanderer paraclete  
 Disappeared slow-singing a flame-word rune.  
 Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune.

Such "sun-realms of supernal seeing", are, we repeat, not common. Hence the difficulty in our enjoyment of these admirable verses and the eagerness to condemn them on textual pretexts. Once the still centre of these visions is reached there would be the need and the justification of the method of textual analysis so popular with a section of modernist critics. It is only such an empathy that can give sense and sanity to our valuation. To begin with the textual criticism of these, or any poems, without contacting their origin, their *raison d'être*, and to approach them with opposite bias and prejudices would be an external and suicidal tactics that has very little to commend itself. That will be about and about them but not of them. Such a criticism when it comes after an initial acceptance and entry into these moods and "moment-mere visions" would be in place.<sup>11</sup> That would be the time, again, to examine his many verse experiments.

In Sri Aurobindo's poetry the moon-symbolism recurs. In *Moon of the Two Hemispheres*,<sup>12</sup> he not only hints at an explanation of the symbol but gives two delicate and refined images.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's excellent analysis of this poem in the *Advent*, Feb. 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. A. E.'s *Star Teachers*,

These myriad eyes that look on me are mine;  
 Wandering beneath them I have found again,  
 The ancient ample moment, the divine,  
 The God-root within men.  
 For this, for this, the lights innumerable  
 As symbols shine that we true light win;  
 For every star and every deep they fill  
 Are stars and deeps within.

A gold moon-raft floats and swings slowly  
 And it casts a fire of pale holy blue light  
 On the dragon tail aglow of the faint night  
     That glimmers far,—swimming,  
 The illumined shoals of stars skimming,  
 Overspreading earth and drowning the heart in sight  
 With ocean depths and breadths of the Infinite.  
 A gold moon-ship sails or drifts ever  
 In our spirit's skies and halts never, blue-keeled,  
 And it throws its white-blue fire on this grey field,  
     Night's dragon loop,—speeding,  
 The illumined star-thought sloops leading  
 To the Dawn, their harbour home, to the Light unscaled,  
 To the sun-face Infinite, the Untimed revealed.

A line like "the dragon tail aglow of the faint night that glimmers far" sets the tone and tempo of the poem and it has a strange feeling, colour and movement about it.<sup>14</sup> The only other poet who can frequently rouse such unnamed feelings of cosmicity is Blake, but in Blake the energy is disruptive and daemonic, a little like storming heaven. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, is serene. He is not merely possessed by the Infinite, he is in possession of it. Like the true *sādhaka* he has "climbed the stairs and rested his feet firmly on each step in order to reach the summit". Even when developing the otherwise most exciting ideas and similes, he maintains as well as conveys a peculiar inner poise which cannot be mistaken and which is the concomitant of yogic vision and discipline. This is also why and how the images grow beyond sensuousness and seem to have the purity of the supraphysical, free from "the bondage of brute things." Something of the force, light and bliss of the supramental informs almost all his later verse. Even those who are unacquainted with his special point of view or intention cannot fail (if they are at all sensitive to the modulations of great poetry and to the "transcendental feeling") to vibrate with the tone and ring of the later Aurobindean verse. Apart from any theorising either about the ideas and symbols used in them or the explanations of the verse-technique employed in so many of them.

*The Rose of God* is the last poem in *Transformation and Other Poems*. The finale of *The Bird of Fire* is the *Rose of God*, another symbol which he has used with such balanced ecstacy and flaming energy.

Rose of God, vermilion stain on the sapphires of heaven,  
 Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet, seven-tinged with the ecstasies seven!  
 Leap up in our heart of humanhood, O miracle, O flame,  
 Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name.  
 Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being,  
 Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!

<sup>14</sup> "One has a sense here", as Sri Aurobindo says of some lines from Milton and Wordsworth, "of a rhythm which does not begin or end with the line, has for ever been sounding in the eternal planes and began even in Time ages ago and which returns into the Infinite to go sounding on for ages after. In fact the word-rhythm is only part of what we hear, a support for the rhythm we listen to behind in 'the ear of the ear', *śrotasya śrotam*. To a certain extent this is what all great poetry tries to have, but it is only the Overmind rhythm to which it is natural and easy as breathing and in which it is not only behind the word-rhythm but gets into the word-movement itself and finds a kind of fully supporting body there". Quoted in *Anami*, p. 277.

Live in the mind of our earthhood ; O golden Mystery, flower,  
 Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous Hour.  
 Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,  
 Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night !  
 Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,  
 Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.  
 Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,  
 Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre !  
 Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme ;  
 Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the children  
 of Time.

Rose of God, like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,  
 Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace !  
 Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss :  
 Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life Beautitude's kiss.

The "outbreak of the Godhead in man", then, is the term and end of Aurobindean poetry as of his Yoga. To miss this would be to miss all. But unlike most poetry of ideas it is quite free from that aridity and subjectivism which disfigure so much of potentially great poetry. Conflict, frustration and melancholy are the stigma of most of our poets.<sup>14</sup> Sri Aurobindo transcends and integrates experiences to bring down a renewed and puissant harmony, while Shelleys and Arnolds beat their wings in the void.<sup>15</sup> One explanation of this integration will be found in the indirect criticism of Aldous Huxley. Talking of Arnold's poetry Huxley says : "Like so many poets and moralists before him, Arnold had stated a problem to which there is no practical solution except through some system of spiritual exercises. . . . That Arnold should have failed to draw the unavoidable conclusion from the premises of his own thoughts and feelings seems puzzling only when we consider him apart from his environment. The mental climate in which he lived was utterly unpropitious to the flowering of genuine mysticism. The nineteenth century could tolerate only false, *ersatz* mysticism".<sup>16</sup>

We may note here, in passing, another incapacity of the modern mind, a further chance for misunderstanding Sri Aurobindo's later poems as being weak and unreal. A superficial reaction which might traduce these poems as being mostly (or merely) verbal or even verbose, has only to extend its own inept logic to characterise their very poise and harmony as signs of feebleness rather than of a supreme power blended with grace. Sri Aurobindo's poetry is the poetry of power than of weakness, but it is "a world of power (usually) hushed into symbols of hue, silent unendingly". With the majority of poets their conflict (petty or profound as the case may be), their very agitation and unbalance receive vital and violent expressions. In this limited sense his poetry cannot be called

<sup>14</sup> Cf. "I know too well that in Europe all the great artists—like Michael Angelo, Rembrandt, Beethoven, etc.—had to be, like Christ Himself, 'Hommes de Douleur' (Men of sorrow). It is almost a necessary condition of the real genius who must first pass the test of misery, solitude, doubt and misapprehension". Romain Rolland, in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy, *Anant*, p. 323.

<sup>15</sup> *Vyākulātā* or excited, passionate eagerness is more intense, but less widely powerful, and it is disturbing and exciting, giving intense pleasure and pain in the pursuit, but not so vast a bliss in the acquisition".

In the case of most poets the amount of pain far exceeds the pleasure.

In Arnold's poetry, we may note, there is curious resistance as if he is holding back something. Technically, he is so uninteresting too.

<sup>16</sup> *Grey Eminence*, p. 61.

dramatic. But *Shiva* and *The Rose of God* are exquisite movements of power : in *Shiva* the evocation borders on the magical, the incantatory ; while the fire-passion that infuses *The Rose of God* is altogether of a higher order than is to be met with in most poems of prayer, adoration and wish-fulfilment. Feebleness is nowhere near them.

Perhaps if his poems had more of a Shelleyan pandemonium or a Browningsque muscularity the readers might have been more at ease, and the charge of lack of energy more tenable. The stoicism of Lucretius and his intellectual sublimity are more akin to us ; the fervour of the mystic, the aspiration of the idealist and his more frequent sob-stuff is familiar to us ; this luminous poetry of yoga is yet beyond the ken of our normal imaginative reach and grasp. Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's Heaven for? Ourselves blind, how can we see its form and colour ; ourselves caught in the coils of Ignorance how can we taste and touch the power and bliss of the supramental? By a sincere opening and receptivity we can, however, feel something of its form and power, its peculiar melody. But to try to judge the emergent new by the prevailing or the discarded old measures is an attempt, though common, doomed to failure. Or, worse, to remain confined in a vicious self-complacency.

Even a cursory glance reveals the frequency of certain words in these poems—vast, ineffable, silence, power, bliss, vision, trance, splendour, alone. Ideas like those of descent, opening, channels of the divine are repeated. Compound words like sapphire-summer, fire-sweet, star-dance, flame-trance, star-thought, dream-caught, crimson-white, power-swept abound in plenty. On the basis of these alone a charge sheet can be drawn against the poet, as some have done with Shelley for instance. Words apart, among the movements suggested by the poems too are striking, corresponding to two systems that, according to Sri Aurobindo, “are simultaneously active in the organisation of the being and its parts : one is concentric, a series of rings or sheaths with the psychic at the centre ; another is vertical, an ascension and descent, like a flight of steps, a series of superimposed planes with the Supermind-Overmind as the crucial nodus of the transition beyond the human into the divine”.<sup>17</sup> But these words, ideas and movements are germane to his inspiration. They have not been put down without an inner logic and appropriateness, not as mere padding. The impression they create is not vague nor vaporous, “pinnacled dim in the intense inane”. They are the counters, the inevitable counters, of the experiences which they so consummately help to focus and communicate, and a *prima facie* evidence against them would not be valid. It is, however, true that, like “the poets of the Veda”, he has “another mentality than ours”, that “his use of the images is of a peculiar kind and an antique cast of vision gives a strange outline to his substance”.

It would not be out of point, in this connection, to note A. E.'s opinion on the subject, and Sri Aurobindo's commentary on the same.

“You like many Indians”, A. E. wrote to Dilip Kumar Roy, “are so familiar with your own great traditions that it is natural for you to deal with ideas verging on the spiritual more than European writers do. The danger of this when one is writing poetry is that there is a tendency to use or rather overuse great words like “immensity”, “Omnipotence”, “inexhaustible”, “limitless”, etc. By the very nature of the ideas which inspire you, you are led to use words of that nature because of a

<sup>17</sup> *The Riddle of This World*, pp. 5-6.

kinship with the infinity of the spirit. But in the art of verse if one uses these words overmuch they tend to lose their power just as a painting in which only the primary colours were used would weary the eye. . . . English is a great language, but it has very few words relating to spiritual ideas . . . there are few luminous words that can be used when there is a spiritual emotion to be expressed".<sup>18</sup>

On which Sri Aurobindo comments thus :

"His remarks about 'immensity' etc. are very interesting to me ; for these are the very words, with others like them, that are constantly recurring at short intervals in my poetry when I express not spiritual thought but spiritual experience. I know perfectly well that this recurrence would be objected to as bad technique or as an inadmissible technique ; but this seems to me a reasoning from the convention of a past order which cannot apply to a new poetry dealing with spiritual things. A new art of words written from a new consciousness demands a new technique. A. E. himself admits that his rule makes a great difficulty because these 'high light' words are few in the English language. His solution may be well enough when the realisations which they represent are *mental* realisations or intuitions occurring on the summits of the consciousness, rare 'high lights' over the low tones of the ordinary natural and occult experience (ordinary, of course, to the poet, not to the average man) ; there his solution would not violate the truth of the vision, would not misrepresent the balance or harmony of its actual tones. But what of one who lives in an atmosphere full of these high lights—in a consciousness in which the finite, not only the occult but the earthly finite, is bathed in the sense of the eternal, the illimitable and infinite, the immensities or intimacies of the timeless? To follow A. E.'s rule might well mean to falsify the atmosphere, to substitute a merely æsthetic fabrication for a true seeing and experience. Truth first—a technique expressive of the truth in the forms of beauty has to be found, if it does not exist. It is no use arguing from the spiritual inadequacy of the English language ; it has to be made adequate. It has been plastic enough in the past to succeed in expressing all that it was asked to express however new ; it must now be urged to a farther new progress".<sup>19</sup>

Appendix B contains sixteen poems, in quantitative metres. Most of these are short. In tone and treatment these are a continuation of *Six Poems* and *Transformation and Other Poems*. A sense of silence and egoless impersonality<sup>20</sup> laps these poems round. They are at the same time simpler. Certainly they are not overwhelmed with ideas and ideation as *In The Moonlight*, or marked out by the obvious but enjoyable rhythmic of, say, *Ahana*. In these poems, "the passion of a bliss yet to be sweeps from Infinity's sea". And if, as Middleton tells us, "we demand the high thoughts of poetry should not merely thrill, but also still our hearts," what heaven of bliss and silence than Sri Aurobindo's poetry? The names of many of the poems are typical : *Ocean Stillness*, *Trance in Waiting*, *Soul in ignorance*, *Decent*, *Soul's Scene*, *Ascent*.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *Anami*, pp. 272-73.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. "The Rishi was not an individual composer of the hymn but the seer of an eternal truth and an impersonal knowledge. The language of Veda itself is *sruti*—a rhythm not composed by the intellect but . . . a divine word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge."

Some of them have a peculiarly soft and gold-wite shine, a strange lyricism, "the bright suddenness of wings in a golden air". See *The Dream Boat*. Its poise and grace are remarkable, simple and quivering, the "sweet secret" delicacy of a Chinese painting. The opening stanza is a liquid whisper :

Who was it that came to me in a boat made of dream-fire  
 With his flame brow and his sun-gold body?  
 Melted was the silence into a sweet secret murmur,  
 "Do you come now? is the heart's fire ready?"

Hidden in the recesses of the heart something shuddered,  
 It recalled all that the life's joy cherished,  
 Imaged the felicity that it must leave lost for ever,  
 And the boat passed and the gold god vanished.

Now within the hollowness of the world's breast inhabits  
 For the love died and the old joy ended—  
 Void of a felicity that has fled, gone for ever,  
 And the gold god and the dream boat come not.

The style and the symbolism are not obscure in any way. That the poet is not a dealer only in softness but is equally at ease in presenting the passionate and "fearful symmetry" of the wild and terrible in Nature, comes out in *The Tiger and the Deer*. Though the poem as a whole modifies, characteristically, the implications of its opening and brings it round to the essential Aurobindean outlook and Gestalt. *The Tiger and the Deer* explains the idea of how "the slain survive the slayer", but with a power of evocation which combines the physical with the prophetic. The lines are in free quantitative verse :

Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept through the green  
 heart of the forest,  
 Gleaning eyes and mighty chest and soft soundless paws of  
 grandeur and murder?  
 The wind slipped through the leaves as if afraid lest its voice and  
 the noise of its steps perturb the pitiless Splendour,  
 Hardly daring to breathe. But the great beast crouched and  
 crept, and crept and crouched a last time, noiseless, fatal,  
 Then suddenly death leaped on the beautiful wild deer  
 as it drank  
 Unsuspecting from the great pool in the forest's coolness  
 and shadow,  
 And it fell and, torn, died remembering its mate left sole in  
 the deep woodland,—  
 Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel  
 beauty in Nature.  
 But a day may yet come when the tiger crouches and leaps  
 no more in the dangerous heart of the forest,  
 As the mammoth shakes no more the plains of Asia ;  
 Still then shall the beautiful wild deer drink from the coolness  
 of great pools in the leaves' shadow ;  
 The mighty perish in their might ;  
 The slain survive the slayer.

The modulations in rhythm as well as the three transitions in the poem are striking and need to be noted. First, the awe and grandeur, the physicality of the terror and silence of the tiger's creeping advance towards the unsuspecting prey ; secondly, the dying fall of the rhythm, the sheer pathos and psychology of the deer's memory of its mate "left sole in the deep woodland"; finally, the last movement of generalisation, ending in a far-reaching prophecy. All the three movements are intensely real and passionate in their own ways and combine to produce that composite effect which the last sentence sums up with precision, almost like Q.E.D. The poem has the truth of fact no less than the truth of vision. The poem may be compared with Emerson's *Brahma* and D. H. Lawrence's *Snake* from the points of view of idea and technique respectively.

All my cells thrill swept by a surge of splendour,  
Soul and body stir with a mighty rapture,  
Light and still more light like an ocean billows  
Over me, round me.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dire the large descent of the Godhead enters  
Limbs that are mortal.

\* \* \* \* \*

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces  
Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings ;  
Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions,  
Blaze in my spirit.

\* \* \* \* \*

All the world is changed to a single oneness ;  
Souls undying, infinite forces, meeting,  
Joint in God-dance weaving a seamless Nature,  
Rhythm of the Deathless.

Mind and heart and body, one harp of being,  
Cry that anthem, finding the notes eternal,—  
Light and night and bliss and immortal wisdom  
Clasping for ever.

*Ilion*, the last, only long and narrative poem is "an attempt to illustrate to some extent the theory of hexameter" put forward in another Appendix.

These poems in the Appendices, like *Six Poems* and *Transformation and Other Poems* are remarkable by reason of the strange and difficult regions of experience which they explore with such ineffable grace, sureness and without getting repetitive or abstract. "They burn with the aura of beatitude". He "writes as though he were standing among the stars, with the constellations for his companies". Blank negation or asceticism are nowhere near this gossamer of the Life Divine, and though he has translated Bhartṛihari's *Nilishataka* he has not written any *Moha-Mudgara*. The immense discipline, textual and spiritual, does not hinder the reader's absorption into the modes of consciousness revealed in these poems, mostly—obsessively so!—of the trance of waiting for the transformation of humanity into godhead, for "the soul-change yet to be". Like the Vedic poets Sri Aurobindo is the "master of a consummate technique. His rhythms are carved like the chariots of the gods and



borne on divine and ample wings of sound, and are at once concentrated and widewayed, great in movement and subtle in modulation, his speech lyric by intensity and epic by elevation, an utterance of great power, pure, bold and grand in outline, a speech symbolic and brief in impact, full to outflowering in sense and suggestions''. Reading this poetry of gnosis we also become

One with the Eternal, live in his infinity,  
Drowned in the Absolute, found in the Godhead,  
Swan of the supreme and spaceless ether winged wandering  
through the universe,  
Spirit immortal.

# Questions and Answers about Māyāvāda

BY A. B. PURANI

“Questions and Answers” is a form as old perhaps as human awakening to knowledge and even today it has not outgrown its utility.

[It is immaterial to ask who is the questioner, for even though the immediate person might be a certain individual, ultimately it is the unenlightened, eternal seeker in man, the ignorant human mind, that questions. And it is the illumined Teacher that answers. Questions are conditioned by the questioner, his mentality and his need, and the answers are relative to him and the condition, *i.e.*, they cannot be absolute and final.]

- Q. I believe Māyāvāda, the theory of Illusion, is the result of a spiritual outlook peculiar to India, and we are indebted to Shankar for a clear and rational statement of that standpoint.
- A. The theory of Illusion, Māyāvāda, is not peculiarly an Indian product. Some other countries even in Europe had it. Even Christian religion took up a similar position before Shankar formulated the theory of Illusion in the 8th century. They consider the world, if not actually an Illusion, at least something unreal for various and perhaps different reasons.

“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of Spirit” affirms a position not far from Māyāvāda.

- Q. There the stress seems to be on the transitory nature of the world, on the futility of human endeavour, and the poignant fact of human suffering.
- A. Christianity makes a distinction between Soul and Spirit. According to it, our material world is a mistranslation of the world of the Spirit which is the abode of perfection. It goes further and maintains that this imperfect material world with its universal badge of suffering is necessary for the Soul and it is for ever bound to remain subject to suffering, in spite of all efforts to remove it.

Plotinus, a Greek philosopher, maintains that the True world—the world of perfection—is not here but above.

Schopenhauer, a more modern thinker, believes this world a kind of delirium. All these almost come to the same position as Māyāvāda.

- Q. But is not Māyāvāda of Shankar the only theory of existence supported by the ancient Indian Scriptures—I mean, by the Vedas, the Upanishadas and the Gita?
- A. But for Shankar we would not have an exposition of our Scriptures that would appeal to the rational mind of to-day. Is that what you mean?

Q. You may put it that way. But don't you think it is correct?

A. You seem to take it for granted that Shankar's is the only possible and rational interpretation, which is not true. There have been several interpretations.

Q. Do you mean to say that they all derive equal authority from the ancient texts, or that all of them are equally rational and convincing?

A. That depends. For, it is the interpreting mind that gives value to texts and it is generally inclined to stress those parts which support its own preference and ignore what is against it,—exactly like a clever advocate who sifts and marshals evidence to support his own contention.

Q. But why did not the ancient Seers make their meaning clear, precise and unambiguous, so as not to support mutually opposed views?

A. The aim of the Rishis was to convey their spiritual experiences or vision of the Higher Reality through inspired speech, or intuitive or revelatory utterance, not to make intellectually correct statements, nor to work out a consistent system of philosophy.

The very word 'Upanishad' implies mystical discipline or a path of inner culture quite independent of intellectual understanding.

Q. I will be more precise: tell me if the Upanishads do not speak of the Brahman as wordless,—without expression, formless, silent, inactive, immutable, Impersonal, without qualities?

A. Brahman certainly is all that according to the Upanishads, but it is not that only, "Neti, Neti".

It is also एको बशी सर्वं भूतान्तरात्मा "The one controller, the inmost self of all beings". Brahman is एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति "He who makes his single form manifold"; Brahman is this Self and अयमात्मा सर्वेषां भूतानामधिपति "This Self is the Lord,—the presiding deity" सर्वेषां भूतानाम् राजा, "The King of all the creatures"; भयादस्य अग्निं स्तपति "From fear of him the fire burns". Lest you think that Brahman can have no form, the text says, सर्वतः पाणिपादम् "It has Its hands and feet on all sides" which echoes the famous Purusha-Sukta of the Rig-Veda beginning with सहस्रशीर्षे पुरुषः "The Purusha with a thousand heads".

It is said that these texts confine Brahman to an Impersonality, a colourless universality, there are passages which speak of It as ईशान—"the Ruler"—and सर्वस्य शरणम्—"The refuge of all". Brahman—the Supreme Reality is spoken of in the Gita as निर्गुणो गुणी "The One devoid of qualities (and yet)—He whom qualities belong".

So you see, the Upanishads lend support to Shankar's monistic view of the Absolute as well as to those of others who differ from him fundamentally.

Q. What about the Gita?

A. The Gita presents even greater difficulty to Shankar's exclusive monism than the Upanishads, for, by no subtlety of interpretation can we shift the stress on action or Karma Yoga, to Knowledge. Nor can one explain away the Vibhuti-Yoga, the Avatār,—the Divine

descent in humanity as an incarnation, the Purushottama—the Transcendent Divine Person, and the stress on devotion and self-surrender. Sri Krishna, in the Gita, speaks in no uncertain terms as the Divine Incarnate.

Q. But don't you think Shankar has not been correctly interpreted ; for Shankar also in a way, supports Bhakti--devotion.

A. I believe there are two difficulties under which Shankar's Vedanta suffers. The first is the historical, or if you like the cultural, necessity imposing on every Acharya the almost superhuman task of writing a consistent commentary on the Brahma Sutra, the Upanishads and the Gita (the famous Prasthan Traya.). Thus instead of writing his own philosophy he is compelled to comment on ancient authoritative texts.

Q. But there he comes out as the most rational.

A. May be so for the orthodox Hindus but for the rational mind of to-day I find that Shankar's mould presents many difficulties.

The second difficulty is created by the commentators on Shankar. There are at least a dozen of them and each adds or modifies, or claims explain, elaborate or interpret Shankar. Some eminent modern scholars like Prof. Radhakrishnan and Pt. Kokileswar Shastri have begun to say that what is popularly known as Māyāvāda is not Shankar's

Even if this were true, the main burden of Shankar's philosophy that "the world is an illusion" and "Brahman is Real" cannot be missed.

Q. I would rather put my question differently. Don't you think that Shankar formulates his philosophy on the basis of some spiritual realisation? And if so, would you not admit that his realisation is the same as that of the ancient seers?

A. That is a more pertinent question though difficult to answer with certainty ; for, we have no outer means of ascertaining the spiritual realisations of the ancient sages except their inspired utterances. As already pointed out, their words lend support to a many-sided realisation of Reality. Efforts have been made to arrange these philosophies in a graded series based on some spiritual experience but there can hardly be unanimity about the gradation. For instance, in Shankar's view and experience the individual is unreal (if not non-existent), whereas in Nimbarka's Bhedābheda there is the division and yet unity, or if you will, diversity based on unity. He would say that Brahman is अविकृतं विभक्त्यु "the undivided in the midst of things divided" and add विभक्तं इव च स्थितम् "the undivided stays as if divided (in things)". To one, *laya* of the individual is the crowning realisation, to the other the reaching of the True individual self, independent of the ego, moved by identity with the Divine will is the goal.

Q. But if you arrange spiritual realisations in an ascending scale don't you think that Shankar's "Kevaladawaita" would be the crown and glory of them all?

A. The difficulty already spoken of will recur : who is to arrange the ascending scale of various experiences? Mind's preference, is it not?

But from this please do not conclude that I consider the realisation of Brahman—which is the basis of Shankar's philosophy and of the classical Jñāna Yoga—as not a valid and important realisation.

- Q. Could it not be said that the realisation of the Brahman as the ultimate Reality was so intense to Shankar that the world automatically became unreal to his experience? And the same would happen to everyone who would realise Brahman.
- A. Let us accept the position that Brahman was so much more real and concrete to his consciousness that this world perceived by the senses and the mind became in comparison, if not entirely unreal, at least a reality of the second order—*l'yāvahārik satta*.

But ancient seers—and some of the modern ones also—do not say so. The highest among the knowers of Brahman they spoke of as आत्मरतिः आत्मकीदः क्रियावान् “One whose delight is in the Self, whose play is with (his own) Self, the one who acts”; also कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीवीशेत् शतं समाः. “Doing action alone, should one desire to live a hundred years”—There is no implication that the world becomes illusion to him.

- Q. You admit that realisation of Brahman is not only a valid but an important realisation. What follows then?
- A. What I mean is that the realisation of Brahman is a fundamental spiritual experience—but it is not all. The intense light of Brahman may for a time,—only for a time, seem to reduce the world to an unreality. But if the light is held and allowed to work, the world will stand explained and even justified as a mode of his manifestation. There are other realisations equally valid, which cannot be shut out if your ideal is the attainment of integral and all-comprehensive perfection. Every realisation has a truth and each has its place in the scheme of the highest integral status. To confine oneself to an exclusive experience would be to be satisfied with partial attainment.
- Q. But then how does it happen that so many mystics and spiritual persons speak so differently about their experience of the ultimate Reality?
- A. There is no difficulty so far as the experience itself is concerned, for one can have the experience of the Reality on any plane of consciousness but one cannot define the Brahman by the mind. The difficulty arises when the mind tries to understand these things which are not mental. Mind takes up a realisation and then divides it and makes unreal distinctions. For instance, when some Vedantins speak of the Impersonal—*nirguṇa*—as the more fundamental and the Personal—*saguṇa*—as the derivative, they cut across with their minds something which is beyond both. In other words, Personality and Impersonality are aspects of One Reality which is indivisible. And so the Kevaladwaita of Shankar is right as well as Bhedābheda of Nimbarka.
- Q. Would you say that the Realisation of which Shankar speaks is partial?
- A. I would put it in this way: the experience or realisation of Adwaita is one side of Truth, i.e., it is “the knowledge of the Supreme as

realised by the spiritualised mind through the static silence of the Pure Existence".<sup>1</sup> But there are other realisations of the Truth.

- Q. Why did not Shankar come to those other experiences?
- A. It is difficult to answer such questions but the general rule is that one is limited in one's realisation by one's own choice.
- Q. But then, how is it that with the partial experience, according to you, Shankar is able to solve the problem of Existence.
- A. That is the question: Does he solve the problem? As we just now mentioned perhaps he had the vivid experience of the static aspect of the Supreme on one hand and on the other he saw the persistent world-phenomenon. When he wanted to find the connection between the two he could see none and so he posited the one as real and the other as less real, and in the ultimate experience according to him, non-existent.
- Q. But he explained the connection between the Static Brahman and the world by Māyā.
- A. What is Māyā but a word? And he himself seems to be fully aware of the difficulty, for, when fronted with the question "what is this Māyā?" he says, "indescribable", अनिर्वचनीया, in other words, "I cannot explain it to my mind".
- Q. He also says that Māyā or illusion "is" and at the same time "is-not".
- A. If you grant his experience the difficulty is inherent in the experience itself. "Unless one realises the Supreme in the dynamic as well as in the Static aspect one cannot know the true origin of the cosmos. Whatever verbal or ideative logic one may bring to support it, in reality Māyāvāda explains nothing; it only creates a mental formula of the inexplicable. The power of the Eternal becomes to him a power of Illusion only and the world remains incomprehensible, a mystery of cosmic madness, an eternal delirium of the Eternal."<sup>2</sup>
- Q. I think we are again forced back to metaphysics. Let us leave the realm of ancient Scriptures which perhaps would not appeal to modern mind and also that of the intellectually uncertain realm of spiritual realisations wherein each great man formulates his experience in a different rational form. Let us try to resort to pure logical reasoning and see if Shankar's Advaita is not the inevitable conclusion if you grant his premises.
- A. Every system of philosophy is rational and may even seem inevitable, if you grant its premises. The question really is whether Māyāvāda is the only rational explanation of the cosmos possible or, in other words, is there anything in the nature of the world—cosmos—to compel one to accept the theory of illusion as intellectually inevitable? I believe it is not so.
- Q. If the Absolute is the ultimate Reality, then does it not follow that all relativities are false and illusive?
- A. On the contrary, it may only show that your conception of the Absolute is limited. The Absolute can become all relativities and yet

<sup>1,2</sup> Sentences in quotation marks are from Sri Aurobindo.

remain Absolute. The Absolute neither means a reality void of all content of Being nor a status of impotence ; Force is inseparable from Being.

And what is this Māyā—the power that creates this world illusion? Is it real?

- Q. It is “real and unreal” -- “indescribable”.
- A. Why take that roundaboutway to explain the world? Is it not possible to conceive that the Omnipresent Reality can be one and many at the same time without losing (like man) his inherent freedom and divinity in the process?
- Q. The famous sloka which is regarded as the quintessence of Shankar's Vedānta, runs :—“The Brahman is true, the world is unreal, *jīva*—the individual soul,—is no other than the Brahman”---

**ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः** You have already admitted Brahman as the Omnipresent Reality, you seem to accept the identification of *jīva* with the Brahman only—

- A. If Jīva is no other than the Brahman, why should the world be anything else than Brahman? Two powers—*Āvarana* and *Vikshepa Shaktis*—are attributed to the Brahman. It is by *Vikshepa Shakti*—the power of self-projection—that the Brahman creates the world. If the power of Brahman is real why should that which it creates—the world—be unreal or illusory?
- Q. The illusory nature of the world is explained by the famous analogy of a man mistaking a rope for a serpent in darkness.
- A. There is an error in it ; the serpent though not actually present is a reality, otherwise even the imposition of it—*Adhyāropa*—on the rope would have been impossible.

But granting even that the world as perceived by the senses and the ego is not entirely real, yet we have to accept that there is a Reality which corresponds to it.

- Q. The Ether—*Ākāsha*—encompassed by the pot—**घट**—is really not separate from the universal ether—*ākāsha*—so, the Brahman surrounded by names and forms is really one.
- A. I have already admitted that, is it not?
- Q. Then it logically follows that names and forms are unreal.
- A. How? You may at the most say that they are temporal but not unreal. The limitation of ether is due to a reality—in this case, earth—outside the Ether. Besides, the seemingly limited ether—*Ākāsha*—of the pot fulfils certain purposes which the infinite ether cannot serve.

The answering analogy of the Vaishnavite Vedānta deserves consideration : it says that the gold of which various ornaments—with different names and forms—are made is gold after all and therefore real.

- Q. In comparison with the reality of the Brahman the world is called a “dream”—an unreality which seems to be, but really is not.
- A. Even dreams are not, after all, so entirely unreal as we have been accustomed to think. Its material or physical non-existence does not entitle one to say they have no reality at all. They belong to another

order of reality. In fact, now there is a growing science of dream-interpretation which supplies very reliable data about man's psychology.

Your "World as a dream" reminds me of a friend who used to compare the world to the cinema show—false, and unreal, while the Brahman was the white-screen, the back-ground, the only reality. The world is a puppet-show. But he forgets altogether that actually a whole living world is necessary in order to make even the empty show of the cinema at all possible.

- Q. There is even a school of Vedantins who maintain that the world does not at all exist, is not born (Ajātavāda).
- A. I have heard that kind of talk. It reminds me of a story of a man who instead of saying like the common man, "I am living", used to be philosophically correct by stating—"I think I am living"—(not being sure whether he was living or not). The unphilosophical listener who probably got annoyed began to beat him. When the philosopher complained "why do you beat me?" the man gently corrected him by saying "It seems I am beating you"!
- Q. But joke apart, don't you think that there is something in that stand?
- A. There may be a historical justification for this school which perhaps marked the first reaction against the Shunya-Vāda of Buddhist metaphysicians. We are all agreed that Shankar's stress on the reality of the Brahman—in spite of his theory of Illusion—was a very great advance towards the ultimate Reality, from Shunya-Vāda of the Buddhists.

But if today one says that the world is non-existent I believe we have to face him with the Buddhistic logic which affirms that the very self—the cognising consciousness—is unreal: it is only a name which you give to a continuity of movement of consciousness or ego! This line of argument, if pursued further, would lead one legitimately to ask whether your waking up to the Brahman may not be a dream, or a play of Māya, the cheat playing at your expense!

- Q. I still don't understand if Brahman is the omnipresent Reality how can the world be real, the world which apparently is not Brahman?
- A. You will have to go behind appearances if you want to attain Truth. If, as you admit, Brahman is the Reality omnipresent then it naturally follows that All is Brahman. So, in spite of contrary appearances we have to realise that all objects, persons, events are That. For instance, when you see a tree you do not see an illusion—but the Brahman. In this sense one may say that a tree is something other or more than, a mere tree. In the state of knowledge it should be impossible to think of it as anything else than Brahman first. To feel and know that one is the Brahman and not "so and so", is a relief. To remain in or retain that state is freedom—Mukti.
- Q. But you speak exactly like the monist belonging to Shankar's school! I don't understand how you differ from him?
- A. Realisation of that fundamental unity, as I have already said, is the basis of spiritual life. One has to allow this realisation of the static omnipresent Reality to develop further, leaving one's consciousness



open to new experiences, and realise the dynamic Divine power working in the world. This cannot be done if one limits his aspiration to the realisation of static unity. The Supreme has to be realised not only as the all-pervading Static Reality but also as the dynamic Divine, fulfilling His own purpose in the cosmos.

- Q. Our seers have put Mukti—Liberation—as the highest goal of human life. For Moksha—liberation—we have to realise our unity with the Spirit and reject or get rid of, our ignorant nature.
- A. We are in agreement so far as the attainment of liberation is concerned. But I want you to consider the further possibility of building up a divine life on the basis of that spiritual freedom. That cannot be done by mere rejection or even transcendence of nature and an ascent to the pure Spirit. One has in that case to realise the Supreme in His dynamic aspect also and then bring down His Light, power and bliss into this ignorant nature so as to purify and transform it. In short, our spiritual aim should not be ascent and escape but integration of being, transformation of nature, and Divine fulfilment in life. And how can there be Divine fulfilment in human life if we look upon the world as an illusion?
- Q. The Māyāvādin's position is: 1. The individual—Jiva, 2. Jagat—the world—and 3. Ishwar—God—these three are, if not quite unreal, at least temporal and phenomenal and therefore cannot have ultimate Reality. They last so long as the Brahman is not realised,—though really speaking Brahman is not to be, and even cannot be, realised being the only Reality. When the Brahman is realised all the three vanish or cease to be. There is no place for Divine fulfilment of life.
- A. Shanker has to admit God to account for the cosmos, in spite of the great Māyā which according to him is the root-cause of the world. But if Ishwar—or God—is the creator he can't be in ignorance, in Māyā. So, He has been placed in the Higher Māyā, as distinguished from the lower one and is even called **सोपाधिकब्रह्म** "The Brahman with attributes". Thus according to him Ishwar is real only so long as the world lasts. When the world goes Ishwar also goes with it.
- Q. That is what I understand as the correct explanation.
- A. Yes, but there are lots of difficulties in it. First of all the conception of Ishwar will need omnipotence as its indispensable attribute; and you know, like the dictators, once you give Him omnipotence He won't easily abdicate. Then you may find that your power of realising Brahman depends on His sweet will!

But jokes apart, I find that Shankar's metaphysics robs Ishwar of much of his reality and reduces Him to a mere figurehead.

The second difficulty is the phenomenon of avatārhood, the accepted doctrine of Divine Incarnation in Hindu religion and philosophy. The avatār remains, and becomes even more of a puzzle if we accept the theory of illusion. To expect the Divine to incarnate in a world which is an illusion is, to say the least, something which is not understandable.

- Q. How can the ignorant world be accepted as the work of the Divine?
- A. The issue you raise is too vast to be answered here. What we are concerned with primarily is the theory of illusion which does not at

all explain this ignorant world. If there was no purpose—divine or other—why should there be a gradation in the cosmic order and a movement from the Inconscient to a greater and greater consciousness, in fact, to the Divine consciousness? Instead of believing this whole cosmic labour to be a meaningless and purposeless illusion, is it not more rational to see in it the working of that Omnipresent Reality which is in fact leading the movement of upward evolution in man by awakening in his heart the flame of the undying fire of aspiration for the Supreme whose very expression are the cosmos and the individual? Was it not the Veda that spoke of the Divine Fire that had entered the earth and was moving upwards towards Its own home?

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